

*Awarded Art*

*Awarded Writing*

*Merited Art*

*Merited Writing*

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# Preface

*For the 49th consecutive year, Patterns presents you, our readers, with the best in student creative work—poetry, prose, and visual arts—from St. Clair County Community College. The students whose work is included in this year's issue are a select bunch: Patterns is a juried publication, which means that panels of judges evaluate submissions and determine which works are worthy of inclusion. In addition to our many in-house volunteer judges (see the acknowledgements listing their names), we once again are privileged to have the input of two visiting artists, novelist Eileen Pollack and poet Raymond McDaniel, who act as this year's visiting judges and whose commentaries you may read at the headings of the top writers' works. We again thank the Michigan Council for the Arts for its continued funding of the visiting writers program.*

*Our regular readers may have noticed a small format change this year. No essay category is included in the 49th edition. This change reflects the body of work that was submitted in the fall. A relatively small number of essays entered led us to combine all winning submissions into a single prose category. We at Patterns have found that the quantity and quality of student submissions can be as unpredictable as the weather; each publication reflects the unique characteristics of that year's students.*

*We will close this Preface with a look toward the future, specifically to next year's Golden Anniversary edition of Patterns. We invite anyone who has ever been involved with Patterns to mark their calendars for the end of April 2008, when we will unveil a very special edition to mark 50 years of Patterns. Please stay tuned to the College's website for updates on the various events planned for next year. You are cordially invited to join us in the celebration.*





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*Friends of the Arts is an organization of citizens of our community who are interested in supporting the arts and promoting the programs in art at St. Clair County Community College in music, theatre, creative writing, and visual arts.*

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## VISITING AUTHORS

**EILEEN POLLACK** is the author of a novel, *Paradise, New York*, published in 1998 by Temple University Press, a collection of short fiction, *The Rabbi in the Attic and Other Stories*, published in 1991 by Delphinium Books, a children's book about AIDS, *Whisper, Whisper Jesse*, published by Advantage/Aurora



in 1991, and a book-length work of creative nonfiction entitled *Woman Walking Ahead: In Search of Catherine Weldon and Sitting Bull*, which was published by the University of New Mexico Press in 2002 and was a finalist for the Willa Award in nonfiction in 2003. Her awards include an NEA Fellowship in fiction, two Pushcart Prizes, an honorable mention from Best American Short Stories, a Michener Fellowship, the Lawrence Award, the Cohen Award and a Rona Jaffe Fellowship, and a year-long fellowship from the University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities. Her short fiction has appeared in literary journals such as *Ploughshares*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *New England Review*, and *Agni*, and anthologies such as *God: Stories, Birth, and The New Generation*, and her nonfiction has appeared in journals such as *Fourth Genre* and in newspapers such as the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *San Francisco*

**RAYMOND MCDANIEL** grew up in Florida, received his BA from Florida State University and his MFA from the University of Michigan. He writes for *Fence* magazine's "Constant Critic" and lives in Ann Arbor where he teaches at the University of Michigan's Sweetland Writing Center and hosts the reading series at Shaman Drum Bookshop at Ann Arbor's bookstore Shaman Drum. McDaniel won the National Poetry Series competition for his book *Murder (a Violet)*, which was published by Coffee House Press in 2004. His next volume, *Saltwater Empire*, is forthcoming.





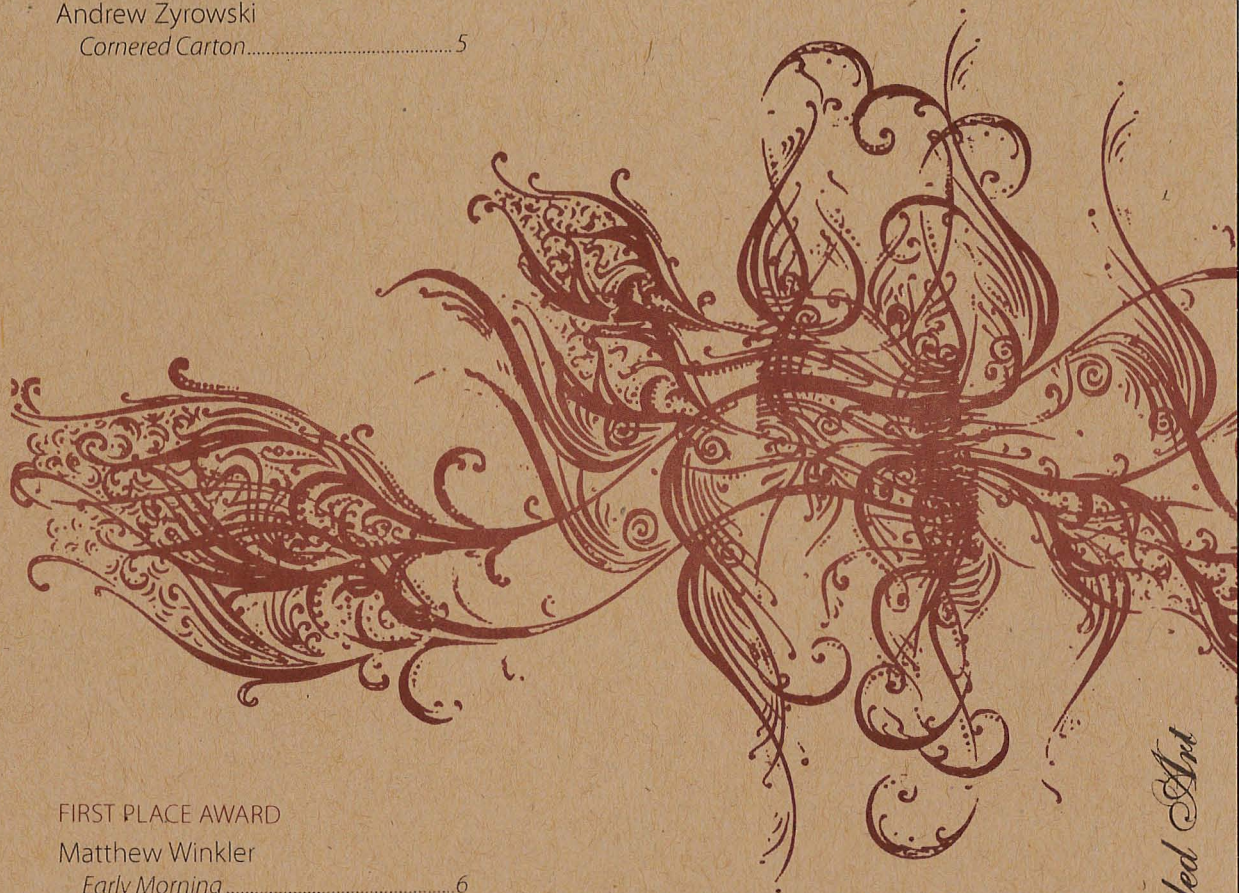




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## PATRICK BOURKE FINE ARTS AWARD

*The Patrick Bourke Award honors an art student who has made a commitment to pursue an advanced degree in one of the visual art disciplines and has been an advocate and an emissary for "ART" at St. Clair County Community College. This year's recipient has walked the campus from building to building to take technical courses in architectural drafting, math, science and finally found his way to the Visual and Performing Arts building. Andrew Zrywowski has found the arts – drawing, design, art history – the other "Language" which will help him to fully realize his goal of sharing his personal and unique thoughts and ideas as an architect.*

*Andy has always had a life plan. First, he would drive from his home in Marine City to SC4 for an affordable beginning to his educational goal, and, once that was accomplished, he would then apply to the University of Michigan School of Architecture. The first phase of his plan is now complete as he finishes two years of basic transfer credit from our college and the next phase of his adventure is just about to begin. Yes – the University of Michigan has accepted Andy as a transfer student into the junior year and, more importantly, the architecture program.*

*Education is always about celebrating goals completed and then setting the next goal and ultimately finding out that learning is a way of life. Andy has also found that Art is a way of life and he is choosing to share his passion for art in the field of architecture. He registered for his first art classes at SC4 in order to balance his math/science background and to begin the synthesis of aesthetics and engineering. Typical of his ability to plan, he has balanced his time and energy, his work and school and all of this with a planning calendar, which consists of writing all appointments and due dates on his arm between his wrist and his elbow.*

*As Andy began to explore the world of art, he challenged the obvious and looked for an opportunity to discover his own personal expressions. He worked and reworked an assignment and yet he always had time to share his thoughts with his fellow students – a word here, a suggestion there – an opportunity to inspire "better work" by other students. As Andy expands his world at the University of Michigan and discovers buildings, architecture, material and new ideas, we know that he will find a way to support and inspire an aesthetic way of life as he challenges the status quo and suggests new options in an ever changing world.*

*Andrew Zrywowski*

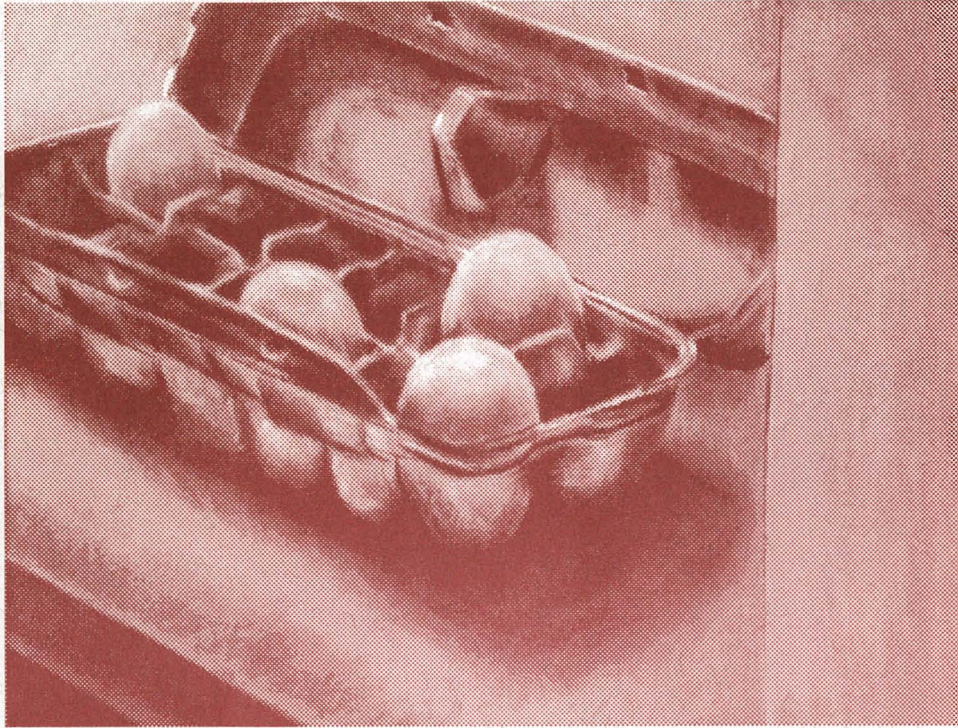






# Cornered Carton

PATRICK BOURKE FINE ARTS AWARD



*Andrew Zyzanski*



*Matthew Winkler*

# Early Morning

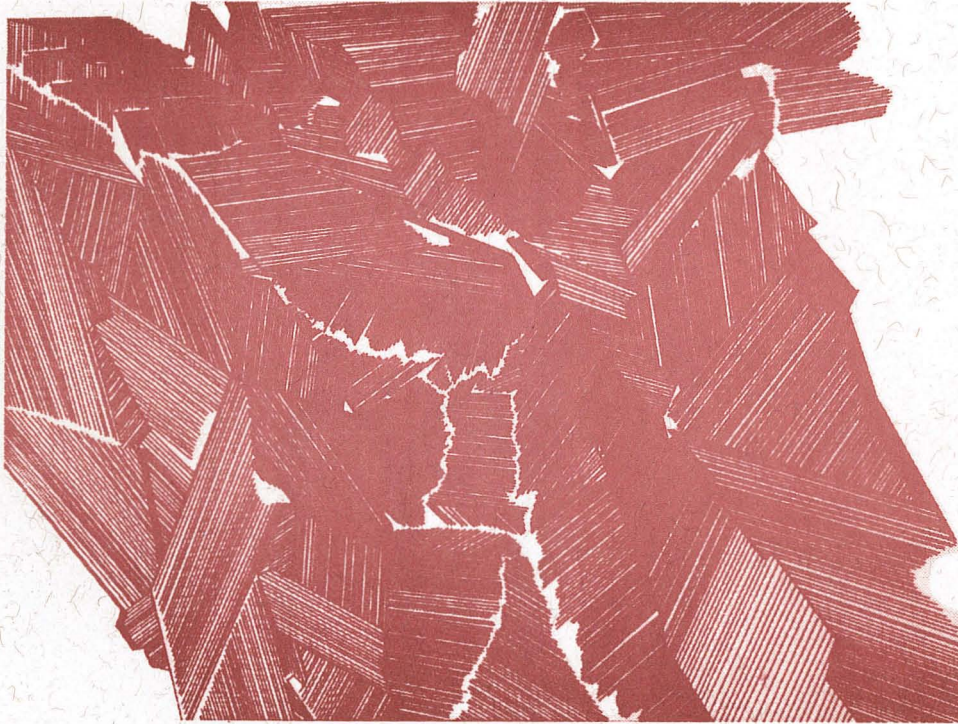
FIRST PLACE AWARD





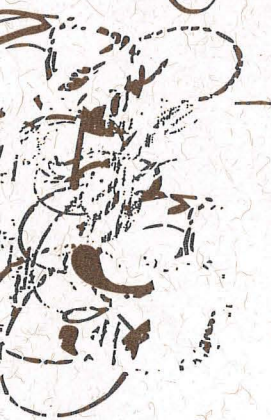
# Geometric Wood

SECOND PLACE AWARD



*Kevin Stabenow*

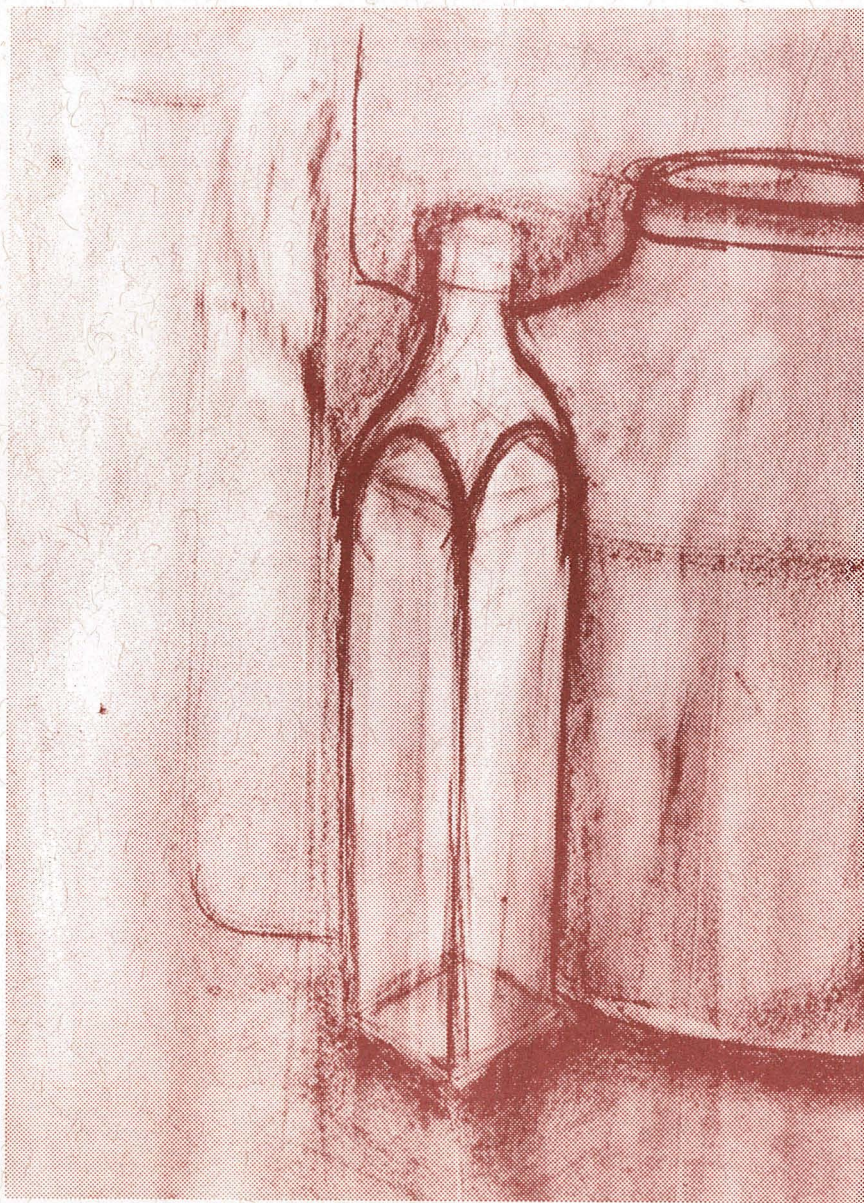




*Simon Carter*

# Second Chance

THIRD PLACE AWARD





# Still Life

HONORABLE MENTION



*Hill*  
*Bryan*







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*Awarded Writing*









## ELANOR B. MATTHEWS WRITING AWARD

*The Mathews Award for "outstanding creativity" in writing, regardless of genre, is traditionally given to the student writer who has been published in more than one genre, whose creative work stands out from the competition, and who has written and published work over a period of time. This year we were privileged to consider three writers—Eryn Slankster, Sarah Grimski, and Joe Kane—who have published writing in two or more genres in this year's issue. Not only that, but all three of these writers have distinguished themselves by winning an award in at least one category. All three deserve praise and recognition. However, Joe Kane's accomplishments, most especially his winning the top awards in both poetry and fiction this year, have earned him this year's Eleanor Mathews Award.*

Joe Kane







# Coming Home

I came home the other day.  
I don't know why.  
I guess it's because,  
for the first time I remember,  
I had nowhere else to be.  
Having no intention or agenda  
I just wandered around aimlessly,  
until I suddenly found myself standing on the back porch.  
My feet gripped the rough and familiar cinder block steps  
as if asking me not to move.  
To stop and look around.  
My eyes caught the stare of the old stone Madonna,  
most of her blue paint chipped off over the years  
by the summer storms.  
Mine too I suppose.  
We smiled at each other for awhile,  
quietly exchanging the pleasantries of the afternoon.  
The way old friends do  
after a long extended absence.  
She seemed so comfortable,  
snuggled between her trees.  
I love trees.  
I don't know why hugging them is frowned upon.  
I've stayed among trees before.  
In a wise old forest whose great green tarp



shielded me from the falling sky.  
Their roots rose up to meet me  
A bed of living stone.  
But of all the trees I've known  
the ones around my house are the friendliest.  
I used to lie beneath them too.  
The poplars would whisper me to sleep;  
so soft and quiet in the dark and gentle night.  
The well intentioned night,  
who tucked me in a sheet of dew,  
that didn't help to keep the chill away.  
There is something about this place,  
and all of its enclosing space,  
that seems to linger on my skin.  
The residue of happiness.  
From back when every day seemed to burst out new.  
When the smiling Madonna was still young and blue.  
I inhaled the wet and heavy air and then,  
Realized I had to leave again.





# Midnight Sand

There's nothing like abandoned beaches.  
Car-less parking lots  
Bathed in humming streetlamp light.  
Cool silver sand  
Speckled with dead bonfires  
Still vibrating with past good times.  
Then sand stops.  
The ground ceases to exist.  
I find myself staring into  
A black abyss of unlit water.  
Standing at the border of infinity,  
The universe tickles my toes.

Walking back  
I drag my feet in the grass.  
An attempt to free them from the sand.  
There are always a few grains  
That don't come off  
And grind into my sole  
As my foot squeezes the gas petal,  
Reminding me to be happy.



# Rave



## KATHLEEN NICKERSON AWARD

*I appreciate how this poem begins with a question (one that, while not quite rhetorical, does locate us in a physical context, the poem's setting) but ends with a command. As this unanswerable why slowly acquiesces to the advice that we all shut up and dance, the poem offers a pattern of personifications that describe the action of the dance floor. Shadows, cast by neon and laden with the inhibitions of their owners, nevertheless match their movements. The abstract becomes corporeal, and vice versa. I'm pleased with how this renders the ambient club experience in fully democratic terms, with every element given its due. And the last line, of course, completes this fusion of body and spirit, and does so with a wry nod to the rhythm and rhyme of which the occasion of the poem is made. - Raymond McDaniel*

Joe

Why is it that our eyes shine brighter  
In a light called black?  
Inhibitions driven into shadows  
That dance with their creators.  
The music pluses through the night's persona,  
As our limbs sway with epileptic grace.  
Flickering silhouettes  
Against neon radiation.  
Hearts beat to the rhythm of the bass line,  
Synthesizing memory.  
The chaos of life  
Spinning at 33 RPMs.  
Dazed and sweaty consciousness.  
Don't surf the crowd, swim,  
Lost in the comfort of anonymity.  
Every move is dipped in groove.



# I hear things

## FISRT PLACE POETRY AWARD

*What an effective workplace lament, whereby the complaint itself and the thing complained about weave neatly into one another. The clanging of the metaphor's machinery, locked into the momentum of the left-hand margin, corresponds well with the gossip and colloquial irritability of the indented sections. This is a poem of actual persons in the actual world, faithfully represented; kind, because it's a little bit cruel. The wish at the end of the poem is delightfully understated, as the men's department (which the poet surely realizes is likely no better) becomes a kind of retail-service utopia. The poem also does a fine job of documenting how the most trivial things are often, perversely, the most memorable and the most exasperating. - Raymond McDaniel*

I Hear Things

Between hanging bras at the corporate department store,

I hear things.

Whispers and rustles and

sometimes low rumbles

Susan has been sitting on that house too long.

I wonder who Judy's baby's daddy is.

34C, 36C, 32D; an automated perpetual motion that can go on for hours

without running out of gas

Janis is just jealous that Kim chose me for the fulltime position.

I can't wait to see Val's face when I dump these clothes on her counter.

Speeding and swerving out of control

past yields and stops

Tammy shorted me hours again this week.

Linda left the dress display a mess last night; I really hate her.

Horns and screeching, an

unbearable ringing in my ear

the entire time

until

I clock out

which is why

I wish I worked in the men's department.



# FAIL

## SECOND PLACE POETRY AWARD

*Sometimes less really is more. The excellent use of the title, which operates as a verb at first but quickly takes on the aspect of a noun, proves elemental to the whole poem, which forgoes elaborate diction and descriptive excess in favor of highly compressed narrative pith. Part of poetry is knowing when to stop, and this poem displays a tremendous sense of when to ease into meaning and when to back away. A small treasure of misdirection, the gap in the narrative – what DID the speaker write – returns us to the start of the poem and the very idea the teacher meant to communicate. A poem both matter-of-fact and casually sublime.*  
- Raymond McDaniel

The teacher walked into the classroom,

walked up to the blackboard,

and wrote,

"If you do not try, you cannot"

Then she drew a long blank line.

Each of my classmates wrote "succeed."

I wrote something else.

Turns out, we were all right.

York  
Roger



# The Beginning

RICHARD J. COWELL AWARD FOR FICTION

*When I realized that the author of "The Beginning" was trying to bring to life the arrival of Hernando Cortez and his men in the New World, I feared that he had taken on an overly ambitious goal and was doomed to failure. How could the author possibly imagine lives so different from our own and capture in so few pages so momentous an event? And yet, the farther I read, the more hopeful and admiring I became. By focusing on only two characters – Cortez and his closest friend – as they worry about one major conflict – how to motivate the men under their command to devote themselves to colonizing this strange new world rather than acting like tourists and turning around and returning home – the author makes his task manageable. Despite a few jarring anachronisms, the author does a convincing job of recreating this time, this place, these characters. A large deckhand enters the captain's quarters stinking of fermented fish. Cortez steps out onto the main deck, thinking that "the sun was especially bright in new places." As Cortez and his friend witness the first calamity to occur on the shores of the New World, the alert reader senses that the captain has found the solution to his quandary about motivating his men. The ending, as all good endings do, surprises and shocks but also strikes us as inevitable. How satisfying that the first business decision reached in the New World should echo across the centuries and sound so familiar to our twenty-first-century ears! - Eileen Pollack*

"We've taken down the topsail," said Casper as he sat down at the table in the center of the captain's cabin. "Now we're just moving up the coast until we find a soft place to put in."

Everything in the cabin swayed back and forth to the gentle heartbeat of the ocean, including the only other person in it. Captain Hernando Cortez paced slowly about the room, stopping occasionally to look out the window that composed the entire stern wall. Through it he had a clear view of the water, as well as the other three ships under his command following close behind.

"Have all the preparations been made to go ashore?" asked the Captain.

"Yes, Hernando, I've seen to everything," said Casper. "Have a seat and relax, we don't have anything to do until we find a place to land and, from the look of the rocks along the shore, that might be awhile."

The captain sat down in a chair next to Casper and immediately the lines melted from his forehead. "It will feel so good to be on dry land again. It has been far too long since I've had a hot bath."

"I for one am looking forward to a hot meal with fresh meat," sighed Casper. "Salted beef might keep a man alive but it doesn't exactly excite the pallet. Would you do me a favor and order a hunting party as soon as we get settled?"



"Definitely," said Hernando, "I could go for some decent food myself."

"I hope this New World has pheasants. There is nothing I love more than a plump pheasant and a strong brandy," said Casper.

"There was an inn in Salamanca, where I went to university, that served the most wonderful pheasant I've ever tasted," said Hernando. "They did magical things with cherry glaze."

"You always have such fond memories of Spain." Casper shifted his weight in his seat. "We've never really talked about it, but I've always wondered why you left."

Hernando opened his mouth as though he were about to speak only to close it again without saying anything. For a while the two men sat in silence, Casper looking at Hernando, and Hernando staring down at the wooden table in front of him as though he were studying old memories trapped in the grain.

"I always liked Salamanca, it's a beautiful place," said Hernando eventually. "The room where I stayed overlooked a lake that, on a clear day, reflected the mountains so perfectly that it appeared as though the entire sphere of the earth was laid out at my feet. I was studying law at the university. The library had these thick leather chairs that I used to sit in all night, pouring over books of past case history. It all seemed so fascinating back then. I fancied myself a crusader for the cause of justice."

"Then, one day, when I was at my parents' home for a holiday, my mother invited a friend of my aunt's to a dinner party we were throwing. This particular friend just happened to be magistrate in one of the smaller courts in Madrid, and I was positively jumping with excitement to meet him." Hernando chuckled, "In my mind I imagined that we would spend the evening debating the finer points of law, impressing all the other guests with our legal knowledge.

But when the magistrate arrived, something odd happened. It was as though, through some imbalance of my humors, I was predisposed to dislike him. Dislike is not even a strong enough word, I loathed him."

"During dinner he prattled on endlessly about his work and, for some reason, the subjects which had so recently fascinated me seemed arduous and futile. No matter how much I silently willed him to, he would not stop speaking. He just kept talking, until his words became lead and beat me into my chair. That night, while I was submersed in the malice of my emotional fever, I saw a vision of what my life was going to become. In every one of the magistrate's words was a glimpse of my future. I saw myself slowly growing old and fat under judge's robes, and turning into the kind of person who likes to talk at dinner parties. The thought of turning into that man made me want to vomit. So, the next day I dropped out of school and joined the army."

"My father was furious. He thought I was throwing away a promising career in law to indulge a childish whim. In some ways I suppose he was right, but I had to do it. The thought of having my whole life planned out was maddening, but he never understood that. He said that he wouldn't stand for a member of the Cortez family reducing himself to a military dog, and that if I set foot on a ship it had better be making a one way journey because he would never want to see me again. So, when it was time to choose assignments, I picked the boat that wasn't coming back."

"Wow," said Casper, "Do you ever regret leaving?"

"Sometimes," said Hernando, "But then I remember the magistrate, and that cures me. I do miss my home though, and my family." Then Hernando's voice shook of its melancholy overtone and replaced it with one of resolve, "I know that if I can do something





really great, and prove to my father that I haven't wasted my life, then he would forgive me."

"Is that why you wanted to come here so badly?" asked Casper.

"Yes, actually, it is," said Hernando.

Casper leaned forward in his chair, "Do you think we can," he asked, "Do something great?"

"I think that the opportunity is there," said Hernando, "But I'm not sure if the soldiers we brought are up to the job."

"I thought that they were trained well enough," said Casper.

"It's not the men's ability that I'm worried about," mused Hernando, "But whether or not they will use them. They are not taking me as seriously as I would like. They all know that Governor Velazquez canceled my first expedition to the New World, and that I barely convinced him to send this one." The thought re-wrinkled Hernando's brow. "I get the feeling that they think we will just land, look around for a few weeks, and go home."

Casper, a lifetime soldier, looked bewildered. "But you are their commander," he said. "When we get to shore just tell them what to do and they will do it. I'll have any man who argues lashed."

Hernando smiled at his friend and said, "No, no, I'm sure that will not be necessary, but I appreciate the thought. It's not enough to just hand down orders and expect them to be obeyed. One thing I still remember from law school is that people are capable of anything if properly motivated. All I have to do is motivate the men."

"How are you going to do that?" asked Caser, "You said yourself that they aren't taking you very seriously."

Hernando then said something that his friend had never heard him say before, "I don't know."

The conversation was interrupted by the sound of knocking emanating from behind

the door. "Come in," Hernando said loudly.

A large deckhand, whose odor could only be described as fermented fish, entered the room. "Captain Sir," he volunteered, "The helmsman asked me to tell you that we found a good place to land."

"Thank you," said Hernando, "Tell him that I am on my way."

Hernando stepped blinking into the sunlight of the main deck. He always thought that the sun was especially bright in new places. Almost blindingly bright. Perhaps it was his mind's way of reacting to not knowing what lay ahead. But it seemed bright.

The sand growled as the ship cut into the shore, and they had arrived.

Faithful to his word, the captain organized a hunting party as soon as every one was settled ashore. He decided to lead it himself, figuring it was a good excuse to take a look around.

Hernando had never expected it would be so beautiful. The light splashed down in a thousand colors, after it passed through the emerald green kaleidoscope leaves. The air smelled so thickly of the jungle's honey sweet perfume that it was hard to inhale, sticking to his nostrils. Everything seemed to vibrate with a kind of quiet magic. Hernando was amazed. The sights and smells and sounds of the place reached through his eyes and nose and ears and massaged his brain. As he hiked on, he slowly lost himself in the lush green sensory nirvana, dancing to the steady one two of footstep rhythm.

Hernando was awakened from his trance by the sound of semi-distant shouting. In this place the excited, blustering sound of men shouting seemed so out of place that it took Hernando a moment to realize what it was. He stopped mid-step, listened, then made a quarter turn and ran toward the sound.



The trouble was happening in a small clearing that sprawled out at the base of a cliff face. When the captain burst onto the scene he saw three soldiers kneeling next to a fourth who was sitting down and bleeding from his left arm. On the ground near the cliff a newly killed boar was still twitching.

"What happened?" Hernando asked.

"Well sir," said one of the kneeling soldiers, "We were stalking that boar and it seemed peaceful enough, until we got it backed against that cliff there, then it just got wild and caught Juan with one of its tusks."

"I really should have known better," said the man on the ground, "Animals always fight harder when they have nowhere to run."

A flicker of recognition passed over Hernando's face, but it happened so fast that any observer would have thought it was a product of their imagination.

The rest of the day went very well. The injured soldier was just fine after he was given a few bandages and a cup of rum. The hunt yielded a plentiful variety of animals, not all of which were familiar to the Spaniards, and, after following Hernando's orders to take all the supplies off the ships and into camp, they had a feast to celebrate coming ashore. It was refreshing to be on dry land again and all the men went to bed feeling well fed and comfortably tired.

It was still dark out when Casper opened his eyes; even more dark than usual because he couldn't see the stars. He sat up and was wondering what had woken him when he saw four pillars of fire rising from the place where they had landed that morning. Casper jolted to his feet and began sprinting toward the blaze, shouting the alarm as he went. He flew through the sand, legs strong with panic. As he ran, Casper began to see the dark shape of a man silhouetted against the inferno of orange and yellow light. The

landing was still two hundred yards away when Casper frantically arrived at the silhouette who was slowly walking toward him. It was the captain.

"Quick, help me get water!" Casper cried without slowing. But as he ran past Hernando a hand shot out and grabbed his arm. The force of the sudden stop spun Casper around and he found himself face to face with the captain. Casper froze at the sight of his friend. Hernando's eyes were so still it was unnerving, cool, in a world on fire.

"Calm down my friend," Hernando said with a smooth and steady voice, "There is no reason to be alarmed." He released Casper's arm. There was a smudge of black sticky substance where his hand had been. Casper recognized it as pitch.

Casper stood panting on the beach, staring into Hernando's face, and his world fell apart around him as he began to realize what had happened. "Oh my God Hernando, what have you done?" he asked.

Flames licked up the side of each vessel, digesting the wood into smoke, which rose in fingers to copulate with the clouds that blocked out the moon. The sky burned.

With the same cadaver calm Hernando said, "I set fire to the ships."

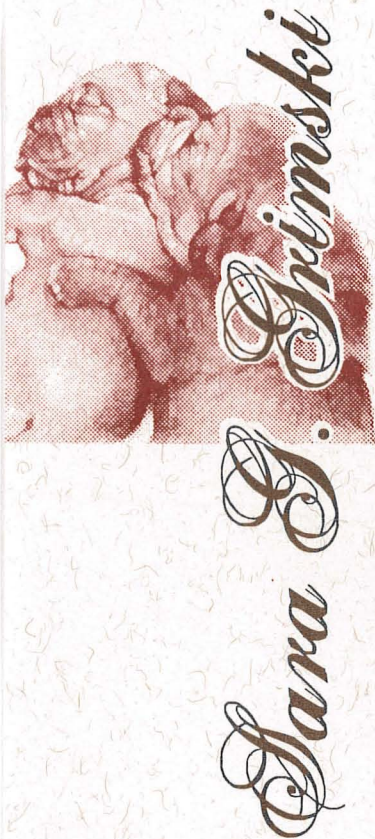
Casper fell to his knees, crushed by the weight of the words.

"Why?" he cried.

Hernando looked down at the man at his feet - so cool - and replied, "Motivation."







# An Accidental Alteration

## FIRST PLACE SHORT STORY

*Is anything more difficult than writing a story in which a kind, good-hearted old woman faces a terrible dilemma, triumphs over adversity, and achieves a happy ending ...without the story seeming sappy or sentimental? And yet, isn't the reader thrilled when a writer manages to do just that? The world of "An Accidental Alteration" is both realistic (with its "beautiful butter cream flowers" and puppy-hating landlords) and the vaguely English setting for a fable. Mrs. Harold Munsfield is at once a believable small-town society lady and a sinister force of evil who "[blows] up the walk on the heel of a light spring gust of wind." Miss Clemson is both a typically English dog-loving eccentric and a slightly magical good fairy or elf who lives in a doll's house that might or might not be magical, too. (Her loose bun of silver hair seems to unite her with our heroine in some kind of circle of good fairies!) Miss Crumpton achieves her salvation not through the wave of a wand but through her own very real efforts to save a litter of mutts anyone else would have allowed to be drowned. Her genuine goodness comes as a welcome contrast to the false "goodness" of the other ladies in town, who don't care if puppies get drowned or Miss Crumpton is left lonely and poor after they have poured out their hearts to her over tea. They put on and take off their goodness as easily as they put on and take off their hats. Which is to say that Miss Crumpton earns her happy ending and the author of this fable earns her beautifully stated moral that "the changing nature of life [is] one of the rewarding, scary, and magical parts about it." - Eileen Pollack*

Miss Adelaide Crumpton was no longer a young woman. A strand of softly graying hair, that had escaped the bun at the nape of her neck, reminded her that it had been several years since she had turned sixty. Yet her eyes still held a spark of expectancy as she slowly unlocked the door of her shop on Saint Blankton Street. Pulling her wool sweater tighter against her thin body, she stepped out into the tiny garden that graced her walkway.

"The peonies will be in bloom soon," she thought to herself, remembering the beautiful butter cream flowers of last year that had filled her neighbors with envy. Stooping she began to pluck a bouquet of violets and lilies of the valley.

"Hello, Adelaide," called Mrs. Harold Munsfield as she blew up the walk on the heel of a light spring gust of wind. "In the garden again I see. You know, Dearest, somehow this always seems to be where I'll find you. O well. Anyway, I must have a new hat. Harold keeps telling me this old gray thing is drab and dowdy and I mustn't have that. So when I awoke this morning I decided that a hat I must have. Do you have anything in blue?"

"Yes, I think I have one that I made up last week," replied Adelaide as she regretfully turned, leaving her flowers, and began walking into the shop. The room she entered wasn't very large. Just big enough for three or four hat stands, a sewing table and



two chairs tucked snugly away in the corner. Glancing at the pastel colored hats that rested on one of the stands, she reached over and picked up a small silvery blue bonnet. "What do you think of this one?" she asked, taking off the grey hat and putting the blue one in its place.

"Hmhmhm, yes, I think this one will do," replied Mrs. Munsfield as she examined it in the mirror.

"Good, now can I make you a cup of tea while I wrap this up?"

"Yes, dear," sighed Mrs. Munsfield happily, "That would be simply lovely."

Miss Adelaide Crumpton's tea was almost as famous as her hats in her tiny village. Everyone it seemed who bought a hat was invited to stay for tea afterward, and few refused the kind elderly lady's offer. It could be supposed that the light sage painted room, with rose colored chairs tucked away in one corner and the delicate teapot was too much to resist. However, if asked, the customers would say that it was Miss Crumpton's listening ear and quiet way that attracted them to the little shop. Somehow in the course of a cup of tea and fresh biscuits, hearts, problems, and lives were shared.

However, on this spring morning conversation didn't seem likely, for just as soon as Adelaide began pouring the simmering hot water into the cups her door jingled merrily to announce another visitor. Ten-year-old Jonas Melby walked into the shop carrying a strange shaped box and sniffing pitifully.

"Jonas, what are you doing here, dear?" inquired Miss Crumpton. "Shouldn't you be in school?"

"Yes, Ma'm, I should. However my dog Sis-sy just had puppies and my Pa says he will drown them if I don't get rid of them today.

"O, Jonas, that's terrible. Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Would you take them, Ma'm?"

"Me? Take the puppies? Well, I don't

know...."

"But Miss Crumpton, they are nice and they won't bite ya none. And they are so small they won't take up much space. And they might even be good watchdogs when they grow up. Plus they will probably just sleep all the time fore a while anyway. Please Miss Crumpton won't you take the puppies."

Miss Crumpton stood up and looked into the box. Inside were three of the tiniest chubby puppies she had ever seen. They were golden red with soft velvety ears, tiny white paws, and rich amber colored eyes that looked sadly into hers. One had a dark black patch over his eye, while another had an all white tail. They were obviously not purebreds, yet something tugged at Miss Crumpton's heart. "Jonas," she said, "I am afraid I can't take the puppies to keep because my landlord doesn't allow animals. However I think if you help me, we can hide the puppies in here for a few weeks while we both work together to find them a new home. How does that sound?"

"Thanky, Ma'm, that sounds good," said Jonas his tearstained face breaking into a smile.

"Good, now why don't you leave the puppies here with me and scramble off to school. You can stop by after and we'll figure out what to do next," said Adelaide, laughing. Taking the box from Jonas with one hand, she whisked him out the door with the other.

"Adelaide, darling, you must be joking," said Mrs. Harold Munsfield firmly.

"Why do you say that, Mrs. Munsfield?"

"You simply have no idea what puppies can do. Even if you only keep them for a week, they'll eat you out of the shop and your house upstairs. They will destroy every hat and piece of furniture that you have in this place."

"Not if I watch them carefully. After all they are so tiny they can't possibly do much





damage."

"No, dear, they are little devils. You should have simply let his father drown them. It would have been better for us all."

"Now, Mrs. Munsfield, I can not believe you would have let Jonas's father drown these puppies," said Miss Adelaide quietly.

"Well as it appears that you won't accept my recommendations. I will take my leave," said Mrs. Munsfield, appalled that the spinster on Saint Blankton Street obviously wouldn't accept any advice from her, the wife of the prominent Harold Munsfield.

"Yes that might be best. I do have to run down to Harris's and pick up something for them to eat." With that said Miss Crumpton handed Mrs. Harold Munsfield her hatbox, and walked out the door.

"The wind's picked up a bit," noted Miss Crumpton as she ambled cheerfully down the sun strewn lane of Saint Blankton Street stopping ever so often to admire a newly blooming lilac bush or a group of pansies. Opening a dull, white gate, she mounted her low flagstone steps, pausing only to scrape her shoes against the side of the entrance. "Has it only been two weeks since Jonas gave me the puppies? It seems like it was yesterday." She thought as she pushed open the door and was greeted by squeals and barks of joy.

Miss Crumpton regretted the inevitable going of the three puppies. No longer were her days lonely, reminding her of the possibilities of her youth that had been thrown away and the photograph of the dead soldier that stood on the mantle. The puppies' adventuresome and funny antics had changed that. "Why just yesterday," she thought scooping up the offender, "hadn't Frolic, the little one with the white tail, upset the milk dish causing all of them to be drenched? Suddenly, the night had been filled with mopping up the milk, attempt-

ing to give baths to the three squirming balls of fluff, and holding them by fire to dry their coats." Yes, life was indeed much more interesting. "Come along dears," she called climbing the steps to her apartment. "Jonas is joining us for dinner, and I think I might give you a little meat. It's high time you had something of substance to eat besides milk." A light swishing of tails let her know that they evidently approved of the idea. Pushing a log into the smoldering fire, Miss Crumpton began to peel the potatoes for the shepherd's pie.

Then from down below she heard a familiar voice calling, "Miss Crumpton, it's Jonas. Is it all right if I come up?"

"Yes, please dear. We're all anxious to see you. How was your day?"

"Just fine, I reckon," said Jonas plopping down on the kitchen floor and holding out a left over snippet of his sandwich to the puppy with the dark patch.

"What do you mean, just fine? After all, it was lovely brisk spring day. One, which if I were several years younger, would tempt me to a game of tag or a merry scamper in the woods. So how could it just be fine?"

Well, to tell you the truth, I'm gett'n a little worried about finding the puppies a new home. I mean, your landlord is going to find out that they are here and everyone I've asked don't want a mutt for a dog. Miss Crumpton what are we goin do?" questioned Jonas from his spot on the floor.

Looking down at the three dogs darting eagerly around the boy, Adelaide didn't know how to answer Jonas's question. Giving away the puppies seemed to be the only option, yet she hated the idea. Her life seemed to have come alive when they came to live with her. They affected every area, from dragging her pink knitted slippers to her in the morning, greeting customers at the millinery shop, and curling up by her feet at night drowsily listening as she read





the works of Dickens out loud. They had even brought her a friend in Jonas, who now came to dinner twice a week and could always be found stopping in at the shop for no other reason than to deliver a bouquet of fresh wild flowers that he picked from a neighboring field, or to give the puppies some left over tidbit from his lunch.

"I just don't know, Jonas." She replied unhappily. "We have to do something soon, though, before they get much older."

Just then the telephone began to ring in a trilled pattern. Looking up Miss Adelaide began counting the trills. One trill was for Harris's; two trills were for Darlene Savingdish, next-door. And three trills—yes it was definitely three trills, were for her. Crossing over to the phone Miss Adelaide picked up and said in a loud cheery voice, "Hello, this is Miss Crumpton."

"Yes Miss Crumpton, this is your landlord. I do hope you remember me. Although it appears you might forgotten, as I have just heard that you have three mongrel dogs on the premises of my building. Is this true?" demanded a voice from the other end of the line.

"Well, yes I did take in three puppies, but only for a short while," stuttered Miss Crumpton very much surprised.

"And did you also forget my strict no tolerance policy toward *any* animal. This is most unacceptable. If you do not remove them by tomorrow afternoon I will have to have you evicted and cancel your lease."

"O, but Mr. Phillips they are such nice puppies, and they don't misbehave in the house, and they are so loveable. Couldn't I have just a slight extension of time in order to find them a proper home?"

"No, no, no!" squawked the voice, "if they are not gone by tomorrow night, I will come and remove them myself. Goodnight, Miss Crumpton."

"I understand, Goodnight, Mr. Phillips,"

said the disappointed Miss Adelaide turning slowly around and looking at the three chubby pups scurrying around Jonas. "Life will be dreadfully lonely and hollow without them," she thought, very much depressed.

"Are you al'right Miss Crumpton?" asked Jonas.

"That was my landlord; he told me that I have until tomorrow to give away the puppies." She said pulling on her dark green sweater. "Would you stay here for a while with them? I have to go out and think this over."

She walked slowly down the stairs, and stepped out into the dusk laden night. "What am I going to do?" she thought to herself going blindly past her garden of flowers and out onto the street. The wind swirled around her ankles as she turned down a little country road leading to the fields that surrounded the village.

Perhaps somewhere in her mind she thought that when her landlord heard about or even saw the puppies that he would change his mind, and let them stay. She hadn't prepared herself for the possibility of having to give them up. She sniffled as a tear ran slowly down her wrinkled cheek. But she couldn't just cast them aside. They'd become a necessary part of her life. When the ladies left the shop, she had someone that cared whether or not she was home. Besides, they had nowhere to go, the poor little dears. None of the ladies wanted them. There had to be an option that she was just not considering. There must be some way for her to keep them.

Rubbing her eyes, she brushed back the loose tendrils of hair that had fallen forward and shuffled onward. As Miss Crumpton rounded the next bend in the road, she came upon a little stone cottage sitting on a crossroads. The house didn't look any bigger than an elf's cabin with miniature round windows and a small Irish green door. It had





a lovely grove of six birch trees in the corner, a big weeping willow towering over it and a row of peony bushes along its pathway. But what caught Miss Adelaide's eye was the sign in one window that read, "For Rent: inquire within." Walking resolutely up to the door Miss Adelaide knocked and waited to be admitted. The door was opened by a young maid, of about sixteen years of age.

"Good day Ma'm and what can I do for you?" she said with a slight Irish lilt to her voice.

"Hello, I am Miss Adelaide Crumpton; I have come to ask about your sign for rent. Is your mistress at home?" replied Miss Adelaide.

"Yes Ma'm, Please come in and wait in the hall while I go and announce you," said the little maid opening the door wider and ushering Miss Crumpton inside.

"The house is rather small. O, what am I doing?" thought Miss Crumpton as she stood just inside the hallway which was so only two feet wide. She knew she couldn't afford to rent both a shop and a separate house. That had been one of the benefits of living in town above the shop. Another complication that arose was if this house actually had room for her hats would her customers be willing to travel the mile away from town. Also the main concern would be if this landlady would be willing to let her keep the puppies.

"Miss, Clemson will see you, if you'll just go down the hall" said the maid breaking Miss Crumpton's reverie.

"Thank you," she replied wandering down the corridor which opened into a sitting room. It had dainty apple blossom wallpaper and a petite wood burning stove that was crackling happily in the corner. There was an amber colored couch and on one of the two chairs sat an older woman. She had snowy white hair done up in a loose bun, and wore reading glasses that perched on the end of her nose. Her hands were busy knitting as she rocked comfortably back and

forth.

"Hello dear," she said looking up and smiling. "Agnes told me that you are interested in renting my little cottage."

"Yes, well that depends. Currently I am renting a house on Saint Blankton Street and have adopted three puppies. However, my landlord will not allow me to keep animals. Therefore I am looking for another place to rent.

"I see. So you are wondering if I will let you have puppies if you rent from me," said Miss Clemson as she examined the chunky blue yarn in her hand.

"Yes, that would be a determining factor," said Miss Crumpton.

"Well, generally I don't object to puppies as long as they are clean and decent creatures. I have a terrier myself, who is quite a doll. However your mention of puppies brings me to an idea. You see the reason I am looking for a tenant to rent this cottage is so that I can traipse off to London and become involved in the many dog shows that the city holds.

"That sounds nice," said Miss Adelaide a trifle confused.

"Yes, doesn't it. But I am straying from the point. The reason I brought this up is that I am looking for a companion to accompany me in my travels. You know, a girl like me couldn't gallivant around without some form of chaperone."

At this last statement Miss Adelaide had to hide a smile as she looked at the eighty year old woman, knitting complacently. After all it was quite hard to imagine her needing a chaperone, and even harder to picture her trotting up to London. However she did like this woman immensely.

"Anyhow," continued Miss Clemson, "since you obviously like dogs I was wondering if you would like to come with me. You could take the puppies with you. And it would be so much fun. I can tell right off if I am go-





ing to like a person or not. And there is just a certain air about you that I like. Anyway that is your choice; you can come globe-trotting with me up to London for a year or two. We will find a nice comfy cottage just on the outskirts of town. Somewhere with a garden, I always must have flowers around. I think it would upset my constitutions if I didn't. But that didn't suit you could still have this cottage."

Miss Adelaide smiled slightly and looked over at the petite stove. "Life would certainly become more of an adventure if I did go globe-trotting," she thought. "And that would be an option where I could still keep the puppies and perhaps do something different besides stay in the same place that I have lived in for 49 years. And the shop would keep till I came back. In fact, I could always open one in London while we were there. Hmmm, and I do admire this woman's spirit tremendously. Looking back at Miss Clemson, Miss Adelaide's smile bubbled into a laugh. "It would be rather fun to go to London wouldn't it," she said.

"Does that mean you will come with me?"

"Yes Miss Clemson, that means that puppies and I will come to London."

"Splendid!"

As Miss Adelaide ambled back to her little shop on Saint Blankton's, she couldn't help but think how unpredictable and wonderful life was. After all when she had left her home three hours ago she could never have guessed that she would have agreed to move up to London, and with such a woman as Harriet Clemson. And last year, she never would have dreamed that she would be the mother of three adorable puppies. However, the ever changing nature of life was one of the rewarding, scary, and magical parts about it.







# Beautiful Infatuations

## SECOND PLACE SHORT STORY

*The basic story told in "Beautiful Infatuations" is a familiar one – a boozy, philandering husband keeps cheating on his long-suffering wife and adorable daughter. But the author's willingness to allow her narrator to bare his soul without irony or evasion infuses an old story with fresh emotion. Just as the "You Fucked Me Again" jar changes to the "Kelli Jar," so the narrator changes from a selfish man in thrall to his own unexamined desires and needs to a man who wants to be worthy of his daughter's love and his former wife's respect. Although the forces that cause this transformation are portrayed in a manner that is a bit rushed and oversimplified, there is something genuine and moving about "Beautiful Infatuations" that wins this reader's admiration. - Eileen Pollack*

The bar was packed as I let the seventh shot of whiskey flush the inside of my stomach with the fading judgment of a good buzz. The sexy young woman sitting on my lap, I think her name was Kristin, had a few tropically colored drinks of something that may not have even been alcohol. She giggled a bit too much, probably acting more drunk than she was. She wasn't the brightest girl I've ever met, but her sapphire eyes made up for anything she lacked.

I wanted to buy her one more drink but the only money left in my wallet was a fifty that had to last me until payday, which was farther away than I remembered; it was supposed to buy Kelli some school supplies.

That night was especially warm, but the air contained a mist thick enough to soak my shirt. As the young woman and I got in my truck, I noticed that her nylons had a run in them starting from just above her knee extending about two inches toward her inner thigh. Starting my car, I slowly pulled out of the parking lot onto the empty city street.

The yellow lines were moving a bit more than I would have liked, but it was nothing I hadn't done before. My eyes kept going back to her legs: her long pink fingernails picking at the run, and her skirt crimping up her thighs. With no opportunity to ask where I was taking her, her breasts were pressed against my side, her blonde hair falling around my shoulder, my arm around her waist, and her tongue running up the outside of my ear. Everything in me wanted to let go of the steering wheel and squeeze her perfect, fake breasts, but her hand fell to my crotch first and she whispered in my ear to take a right, directing me toward a particularly dirty motel, but at that point the back of my pickup was pretty inviting.

She pulled me toward the motel and no sooner did I open the door, the burly woman behind the counter grunted "Forty-five dollars" and took a long drag on her cigarette.

I hardly had the chance to feel guilty before handing her the fifty in exchange for a five and a key. Excusing myself for a moment to



go back out to my truck, she snatched up the key and got a head-start to the room. I flipped the bench seat of my truck forward and pulled out a flask of vodka, took a swig, then put in my back pocket, un-tucking my shirttail to cover it. The rest of that night was the same as most others; A different beautiful girl, a new infatuation.

Naturally, I woke up before she had and never did figure out how she got home, or where she lived for that matter. However, I did get home before Veronica woke up. She sleeps in on Sundays. I slid in beside her and held her close, stroking her hair softly and listening to her breathing so quietly. With my head pressed against her chest, the lull of her heart soothed me back to sleep.

Rolling out of bed sometime mid-afternoon, I looked in the mirror and noticed that I had slept in my clothes from the night before. My shirt, buttoned sideways and half tucked in, had Kristin's fruity alcohol stained around the hem and my jeans were still slightly damp around the bottom. I changed my shirt and brushed out my hair as best I could before going downstairs.

"Where are Kelli's school supplies that you went shopping for last night, Eddie?" Sarcasm drenched her voice, but it still sounded as if she were singing to me. The smoothness of her voice gave it a quality you couldn't ignore. "I gave you fifty dollars, Eddie. Did you at least bring me home some change?"

I shrugged and reached into my pocket, pulling out the contents; a ball of lint, a nickel, three pennies, a peppermint, and a five dollar bill. I handed all of them to her.

Without a word she turned and deposited her handful into a one gallon jar that she dubbed the "You Fucked Me Again" jar. Actually, I called it that more than she did. When something made her mad a new object went into the jar, usually followed by some comment like "I thought you were getting better. You fucked me again, Eddie." Mostly it

had spare change but occasionally a different odd or end was thrown in. It was really full.

Not for some sort of holy reason or anything like that, I try to not drink as much on Sundays, so I didn't go out that night. That was something Veronica told me to try, so I try, just to make her happy. Usually I can get her to dress up and we go out to dinner. However Veronica took Kelli out that night, so after a few game show reruns I decided to go to bed early. I must have been coming down with a cold or something, because I was drowsy the whole day. I curled up underneath the blankets and fell asleep before Veronica even came home.

The next morning was the hard part, but at that point I didn't even know it yet. Veronica was gone of course. Monday started back up her six-day-a-week work schedule, waking up around seven to get Kelli to school and herself to work. I managed to get up sometime around noon. My body climbed down the steps like I wasn't even with it, as if my legs were moving under their own will. I got to the bottom of the steps and saw the infamous jar in the middle of the kitchen table, not in its hidden corner like normal. She kept it there to spare herself the embarrassment, she said. Also, the jar was empty. Well, almost. I opened up the lid and pulled out an envelope with my name written out on it. Not Eddie- it said Edward. I opened it up and pulled out a little note card. A fifty dollar bill and an Alcoholic's Anonymous business card fell out. I tucked it in my wallet, although I'm not really sure I knew why. I opened up the note card:

"Kelli and I will be at Sara's house for awhile. I want to feel like I'm your wife, Eddie. I need some time to think. Do something with yourself. I don't think I can take it anymore. I'm sorry. I love you."

In the bottom of the jar was Veronica's wedding band on a gold chain. I left it there





and accompanied it with the fifty dollar bill. On second thought, I recovered the fifty and tucked it in my wallet next to the AA card.

I really don't think I believed her. I continued my day and went to work without giving it much more thought. I must have thought of it as a vacation; it was just a sleepover. She'd be back in a couple days and tell me she missed me, that her finger felt bare without my ring on it.

That night, a couple of my friends came over for a little Poker. They asked me where Veronica was but paid little attention when I shrugged it off. I opened up a 24-pack of beer and by the end of the night I had 24 empty cans on the carpet and a shot of rum and saliva in the bottom of a glass bottle in the kitchen sink. I don't know who brought the rum, but I know some of it got left in the fabric of the couch. Veronica wouldn't be happy if she knew that. I think I lost her fifty to a three of a kind. Aces. I had two pair.

I woke up to a key rattling in the front door and stumbled downstairs to see Veronica and Kelli, beautiful little Kelli, standing in the doorway with suitcases. I hadn't seen them in three weeks. My eyes darted back and forth from the suitcases to Veronica, expecting a response.

I didn't really have much to say, but to break the thickening silence I asked how much longer she'd be away. "A week, maybe?"

She kicked a few beer cans and newspapers on her way to the couch though her eyes never looked down. "Honey, go pack up your clothes, I'll be up to help in a minute." She gave Kelli a kiss on her forehead and directed her upstairs toward her bedroom.

Kelli looked so innocent, so precious, so protected. All of five years old, Kelli was just starting kindergarten this year, but oh was she smart. She had her mother's brains, that's for sure. She tilted her head at me before she headed away, much like a puppy

would have. She ran up to me and hugged my waist as best she could with her tiny arms and then ran to her bedroom.

When Kelli was out of sight Veronica whispered, "I already talked to her."

"How long are you going to be gone, Veronica?"

"Eddie, please."

"No, I understand you need some time or whatever. Take another week. Hell, take two if you need to. How long is this going to last?" My eyes held onto her, pleading, waiting to hear that she had actually come home to stay, maybe to surprise me with a vacation she had been planning for the three of us; we're all going to the Bahamas!

"Please don't," she looked away as she walked past me toward the stairs into our bedroom.

I tightened my fist around the ring inside my left pants' pocket. "Put your ring back on, Veronica," I whispered so soft I was surprised she heard it, but she hesitated for a moment on the second step. I heard her give a tiny sob but she didn't turn around.

I followed her up the stairs and lay down on the bed next to her suitcases and closed my eyes. I could smell that sweet perfume of hers. It reminded me of purple lilies. Not because it smelled like lilies but because the bottle was the same color purple as the lilies in our front yard. I still remember the day she planted those three years ago. Somehow she got dirt smeared across her face. She drove me wild, she was so gorgeous.

"When will you come back?" With nothing left to insist, I secretly begged.

She turned and for the first time that day she looked straight into my eyes. Hers were red and her mascara was smeared slightly, but she held her head with the same poise she always had. "I love you Eddie. I do, and you know that." She wiped underneath her eyes with a perfectly manicured finger, careful not to smudge her distinctly lined eyes.



"But I can't do this to myself anymore, and I can't keep explaining to Kelli why Daddy has lipstick and wine stains all over his shirts when he gets home from work. I'm your *wife* Eddie. Does that mean anything to you?"

"But I'll stop."

Her gaze dropped to the floor and so did mine. She shook her head, turning her attention back to her belongings.

I watched her go to and from her closet and dresser and suitcases, folding and re-folding, sorting the clothes and neatly packing them into separate suitcases. "Remember the last time you wore that dress?"

She folded the slim, halter top dress in half before laying it flat inside her suitcase.

"It was on New Year's two years ago," I reminded her. "We went to the Thomas Edison Inn. You had your hair done up off your neck the way I like it. And you were wearing those sexy stilettos that showed off your cute painted toes."

I took a pair of cut-offs out of a suitcase she had laying next to me on the bed. "You wore these to the beach a lot. These used to make the younger boys crazy, the way they showed off your long legs. I'd watch you as you tanned, the way your body shinned from the oils. It made all the boys mad when I'd kiss you." I smiled, picturing the high school boys daring each other to go talk to her, and then slugging each other in the arm when they saw I was with her.

She opened up a dresser drawer and pulled out different sets of flannel pajama pants, some with cartooned animals: panda bears and ducks and elephants. Tucked away in the back of the drawer underneath her normal sleep attire were the flashy nightgowns and sequined babydolls meant for play. Each one folded and tucked away, I could imagine how they didn't really cover up her nipples. She picked up a plain gray pocketed tee-shirt of mine that she always wore to bed. With her back to me, she paused

before folding it, holding it against her skin, feeling the cotton against her chest. I never understood why she wore that when she could wear any of her silk nightgowns. She tucked the shirt gently into the suitcase.

I left the room and went to see Kelli. Her face was sad, but she would never be able to understand. And she shouldn't have to; innocence like hers shouldn't have to comprehend a life like mine.

"When are we coming back, Daddy?" Her blonde hair came from me, but it looked so perfect on her delicate little frame, with Mom's lips and her own genuine smile.

"I don't know, Sweetie" It was probably the hardest thing I've ever had to do to not cry in front of her, and I didn't do it all that well. "I'll see you soon. Don't worry."

Kelli went over to the picture frame on the wall, a picture of me, her, and Veronica sitting on the couch the last Christmas morning, and handed it to me. "Here Daddy, so you'll remember to visit me a lot." She was the most compassionate person I've ever met. Maybe that came with being so young, but I think it was just a part of being her. It was the best gift I've ever gotten.

The time went by far too fast. Kelli and Veronica stood at the door, all but two bags already packed into Veronica's car. I stood in front of them both and silently wished for time to stop.

Veronica leaned over and wrapped her arms around my neck. I held her so close and breathed so deep burying my face in her thick, golden hair. I repeated over and over in my head "Please don't leave," but dared not to say it out loud. I held her tight and could feel her heavy breathing against my chest, her slender, beautiful body in my arms. How I missed the nights with her body, naked next to mine, watching her sleep and playing with the busy curls resting on her pillow. I put my mouth up to her ear and whispered to her, "I love you, Veronica." Her





chest tightened and I held her even closer. I knew she couldn't say it back, but I know she meant to.

Veronica was the first to part; I couldn't get myself to leave her embrace. I knelt down in front of Kelli and I saw her start to cry and pulled her into my arms before she saw my own tears. The feel of my own flesh and blood, my child- a beautiful little creature that I helped create- it was a feeling like no other. She was my baby girl. Oh God, how good that felt. Just like the day she was born; with her bright blue eyes, fuzzy little tufts of yellow hair, and pink little cheeks, I can remember the first time she looked at me. It's burned into my memory. "Don't worry Baby, I'll see you soon."

She wiped her little face on her sleeve and gave a crooked smile. "Promise?"  
"Absolutely."

Occasionally, I still sit at the kitchen table, toying with the chain and her ring that I usually keep around my neck, spinning it into swirls and hearts like a love sick sixteen year old. I reread her note almost every day. I linger on the last words, "I love you." I could never tell her "I love you" again; I would never *make* love to her again. I knew everything that we ever had was gone now, but I could still feel it like it was this morning. I can feel her arms around me in our last goodbye, and I could feel the spark of our first kiss. I put the AA card back in the jar. I never did go, but I never drank after that. I didn't do it because I thought it would bring Kelli and Veronica back, but because I knew Veronica would be proud of me.

I even bought Kelli some school supplies for the next year. She was so excited to go to school. She asked me to buy her folders with kittens on them for the first grade. I bought her matching pens and erasers, even the matching lunchbox. She adored them. She always wrote me letters of what she learned

in school, reminding me that she was using the pencils that I gave her every time. Obviously I've seen Veronica too. Every time I see her I want to hold her and breathe in her perfume and tell her that I love her. I tell Kelli instead.

I added a few more things to my jar. I taped the picture Kelli gave me to the outside, and I told her she could decorate the jar for me. I put all of her letters in it. She sends me pictures that she colored and I put some of them in the jar, and some of them on the fridge. Oh and I renamed it. I tell Kelli it's my "Kelli jar", and sometimes it is, but most of the time the only thing I can think about when I look at it is what I threw away.





# Anticipation

## HONORABLE MENTION

*Again, a familiar idea – an old woman in a nursing home – and a situation ripe for sentimentality and bathos, which the author treats in such a genuine, delicate way that the reader can't help but be moved. Poor Annie, condemned to relive her beloved husband's death over and over! Lucky Annie, able to keep forgetting her beloved husband's death and warm to his anticipated arrival! - Eileen Pollack*

Annie pulled her favorite dress out of the closet and laid it on her bed. She spread the skirt—white linen peppered with tiny flowers—across her patchwork bedspread and fingered the lacy collar. Her mother's violet pin would look lovely against the lace; it'd compliment the dress perfectly. She always adored that pin. As a girl, she would sneak into her parents' bedroom and open her mother's ancient, creaky jewelry box. Wide-eyed, she'd peer inside and gently touch the sculpted flower, brushing her fingertips over the pearl accents and enamel petals. To this day, the pin smelled of talcum powder and soap: her mother's scent permeating everything she'd touched.

Turning to her dresser, Annie brought out her grandmother's pearl necklace and earrings. What a sight she'd make! Dressed to the nines, she'd look like a cultured lady awaiting afternoon tea. Floyd would be there shortly and he deserved no less.

She brushed her hair and then packed her cashmere scarf and knit gloves into a small tapestry bag. She took the crystal frame with the family picture and the stuffed duck her daughter had given her for Easter. She wouldn't forget anything important; she couldn't disappoint Floyd. Dressed and ready, her heart fluttering like a butterfly be-

neath her chest, she slipped on her patent-leather heels and headed for the front door.

"Floyd is coming to pick me up today," she told the young woman who always sat at the front desk, the one with the straight, brown hair and thin-rimmed glasses. The girl had a laugh so bright that Annie liked to talk to her, tell her about Floyd.

The young woman smiled, as she always did, but her eyes seemed sad. "Actually honey, you're going to stay with us. We're very happy to have you here."

"No, no," said Annie. "I'm leaving today." It was sweet that the girl wanted her to stay, but she she'd planned for this. Floyd expected her.

The girl's smile wavered. "Not today, honey."

"No, you see, Floyd—"

"Died in 1987." The young woman's voice had softness like Annie's cashmere scarf and knit gloves, but her words cut like broken glass.

Annie gripped the desk as memory spilled over her. The girl was right. For a moment, she stood in the rain of her emotions, drenched with reminders of how Floyd was gone and had been gone for many years now. He'd never met their great-grandchildren, he'd missed their son's second wed-

Katherine Burgess



ding, and she had been alone in their house when she'd fallen a few months ago. That's when her daughter had brought her here, to Fredrick Home for the Aged, to live. Annie remembered the crystal-framed picture she'd packed. Floyd wasn't there; she realized that, now, she'd only forgotten. But, had he ever seen the picture? Did he know how beautiful their family looked?

"I-I'm sorry," Annie shook her head. "I can't imagine how I'd forgotten that."

The young woman patted her hand. "Don't apologize, it's okay. The mind slips from time to time. But, hey—" Annie heard the cheer in the girl's voice return. "You look very nice today. You put the rest of us to shame."

Annie looked up, but she couldn't smile. "Thank you."

With a sigh, she walked away from the front desk and sank down into an overstuffed lobby chair. How could she have forgotten? She took the picture from the bag and studied the faces. Had she forgotten them, too? They looked familiar, friendly; deep down, she knew they were a part of her life. But the names escaped her. Annie frowned; Floyd would have known. He had learned the names of every Elks lodge member within just a week of joining. They said he had a mind like a steel-trap and before long the nickname, 'Steel-trap Floyd,' became 'Steely.' Everyone had called him 'Steely.' When they awarded him that gold pocket-watch at his retirement party, they'd even inscribed it, 'To Steely, for Forty years of service.'

Annie smiled. Yes, Floyd would remember, he always did. She gazed out the large picture window, her heart as warm as the sun that shone on the tree-lined drive. She'd make sure to show Floyd the picture, as soon as he got there.

He was coming to pick her up today; he wouldn't be much longer. She touched the violet pin at her collar, feeling the smooth petals and sharp edges against her finger-

tips. She looked her best for him; he deserved no less.



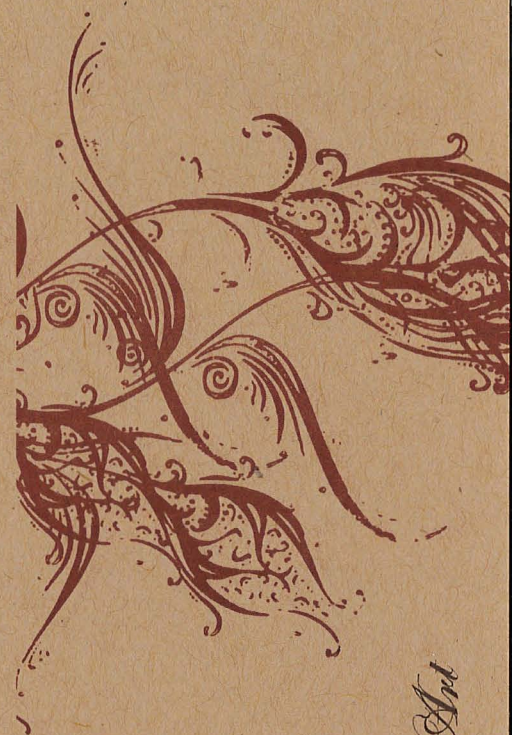


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Merited Art



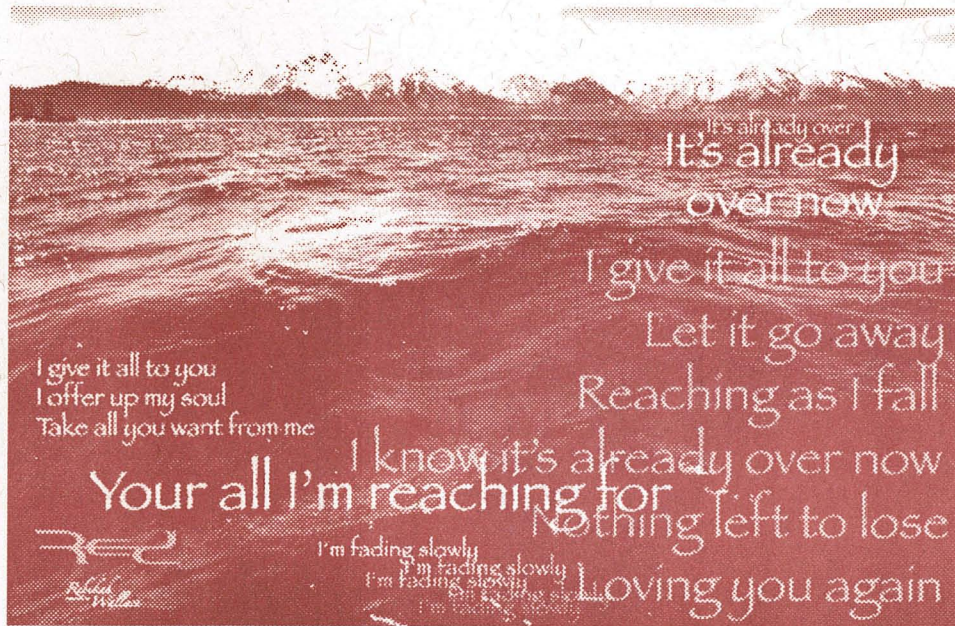






# Already Over

SELECTION OF MERIT



Rebekah Wallace

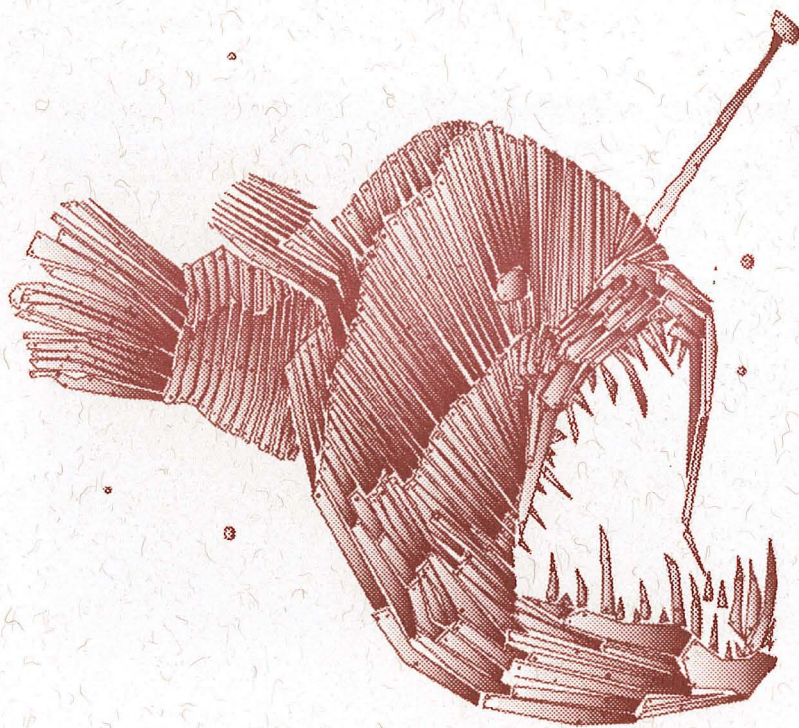




Robert Thomas Dayers

# Anglermetal

SELECTION OF MERIT





# Best of the West

SELECTION OF MERIT



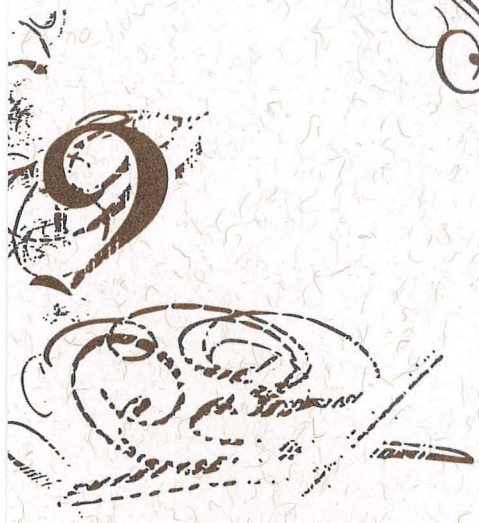
*Matthew Winkler*



*Matthew Jorde*

# Black Blood

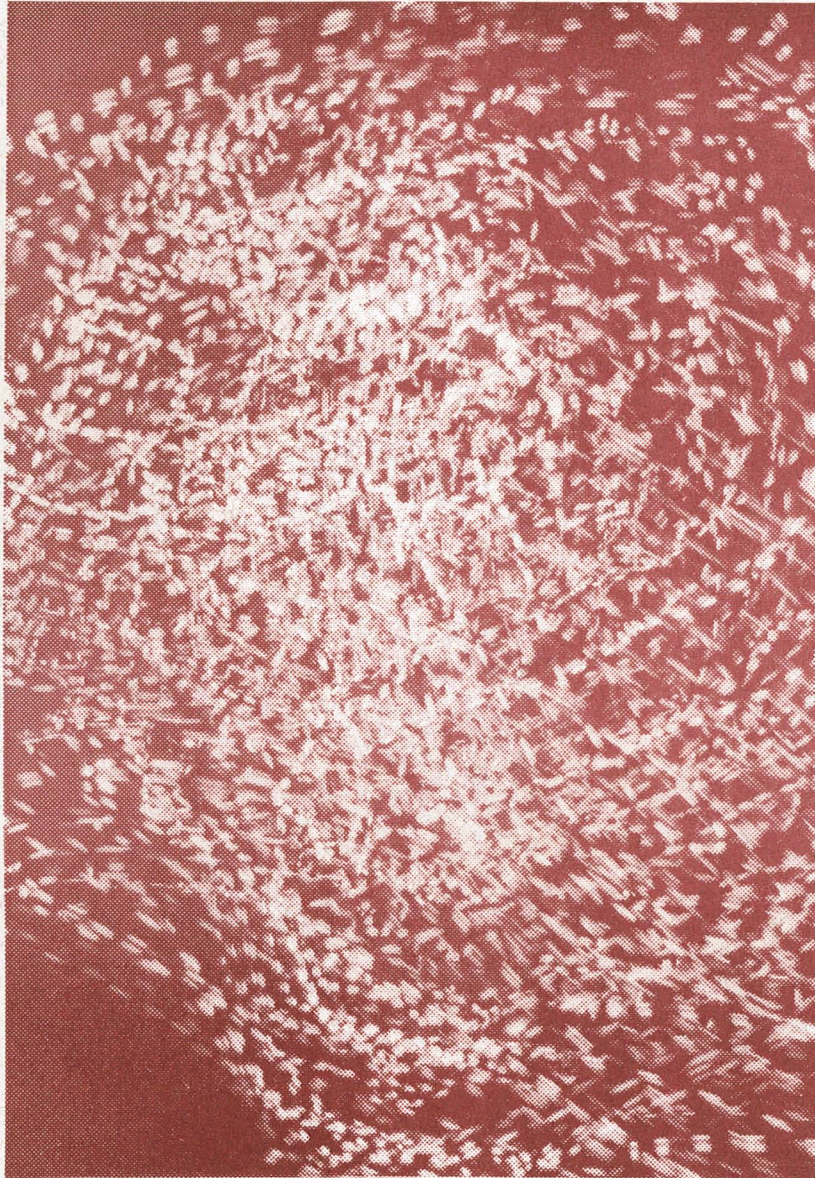
SELECTION OF MERIT





# Celebration

SELECTION OF MERIT



*Nettamarra Face*



*Matthew Winkler*

# Deep Thinker

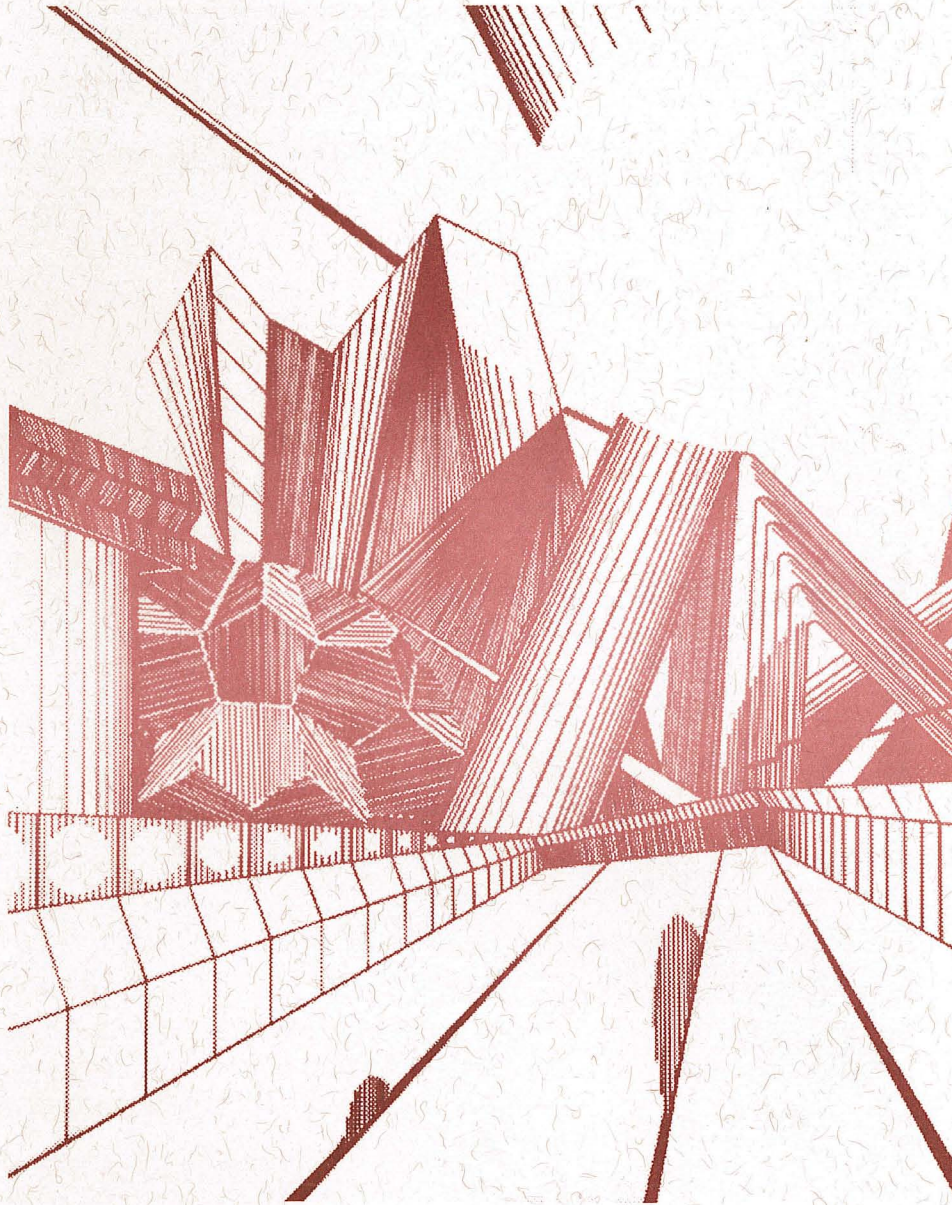
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# Downtown

SELECTION OF MERIT



*Andrew Lynowski*



*Catie Campbell-Cornier*

"Egg"celent

SELECTION OF MERIT



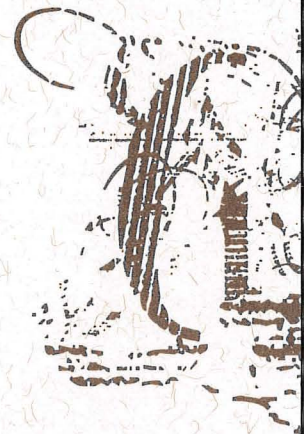


# The End of Understanding

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*Joel Genaw Jr.*





*Brittini Krul*

# Face of the Future

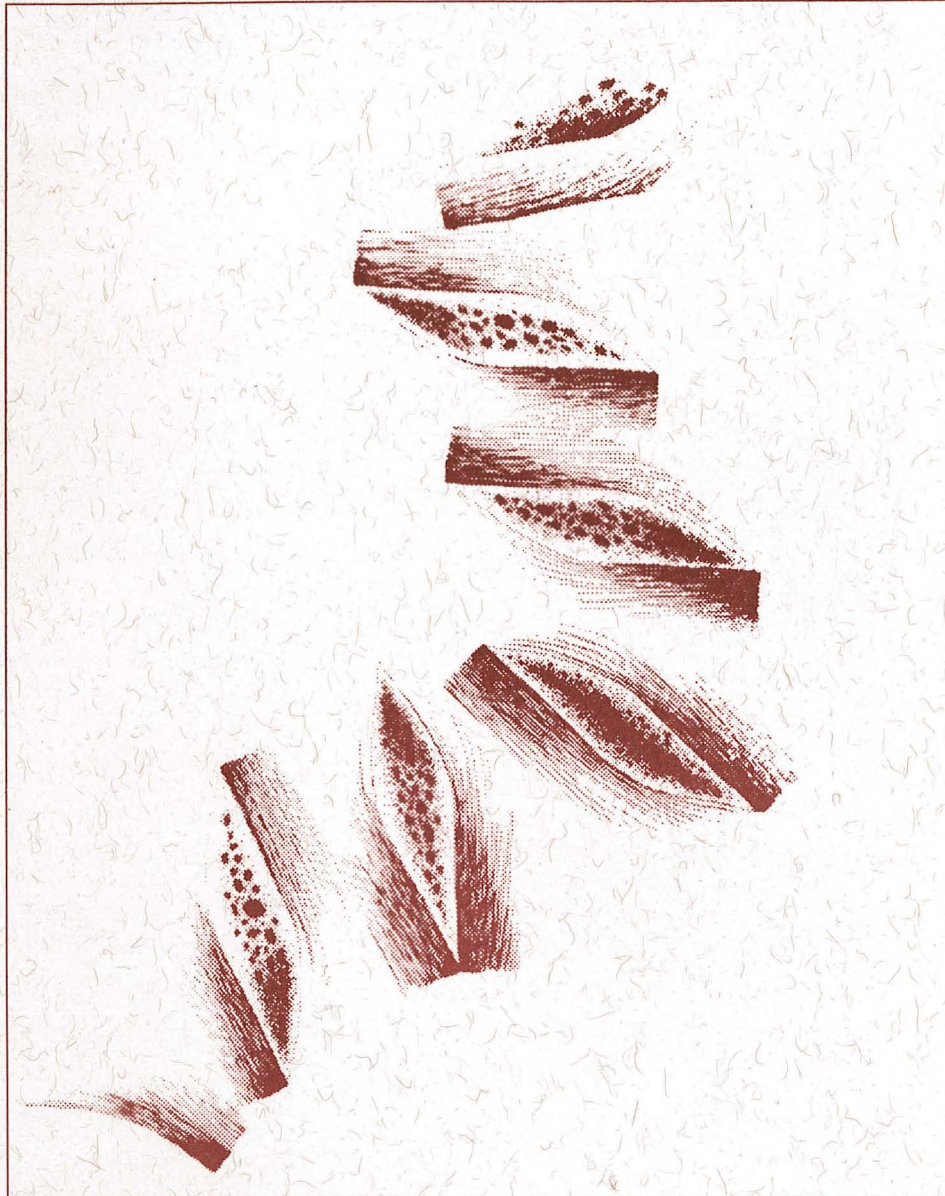
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Fig

SELECTION OF MERIT



*Theresa Walding*



*Matthew Winkler*

# Gallery Hall

SELECTION OF MERIT





# Jazzspine

SELECTION OF MERIT



*Stacy Schaudraff*



*Rebekah Wallace*

# Lost Elegance

SELECTION OF MERIT





# Out of Many Waters

SELECTION OF MERIT



*Dairoll Medrano*



*Erica Gsch*

# Porcelain Cabbage

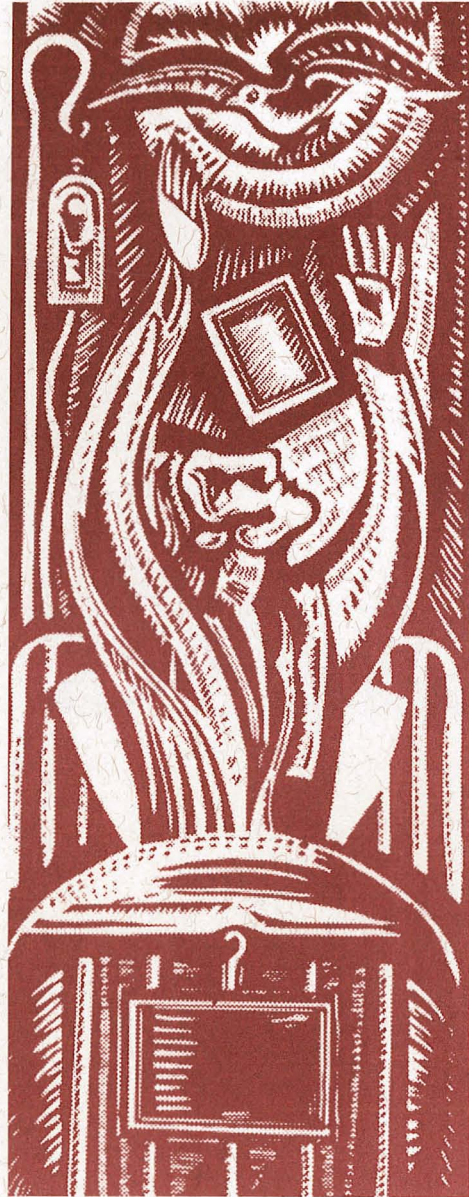
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# Salvation

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*Georgia Leah Onyski*

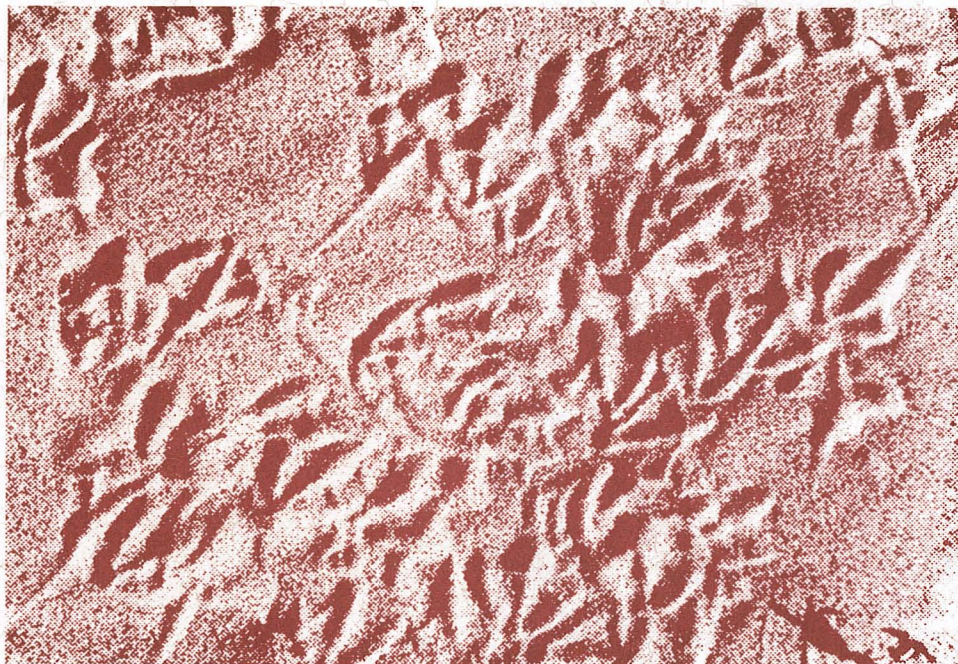




*Chris Basney*

# Seagull Social

SELECTION OF MERIT





# Sharpened Chaos III

SELECTION OF MERIT



*Robert Thomas Dayers*



*Kevin Stabenow*

# Silk

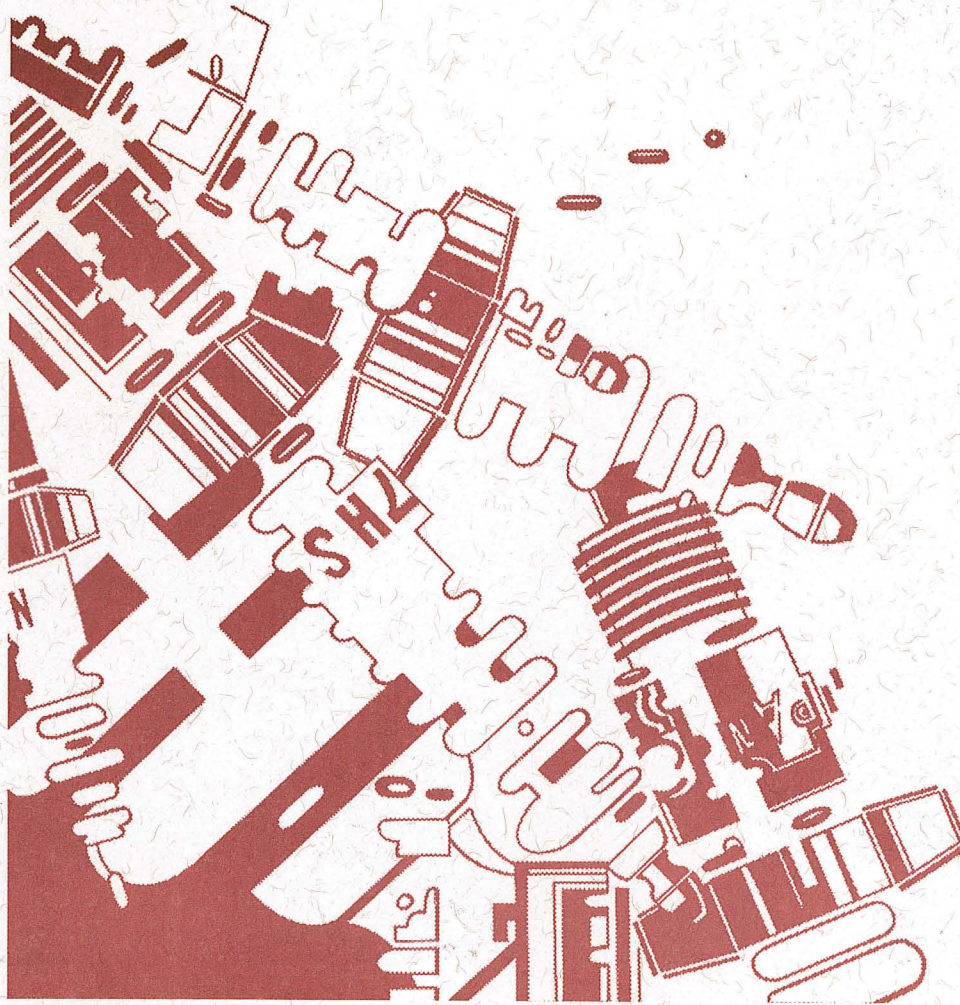
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# Spark I

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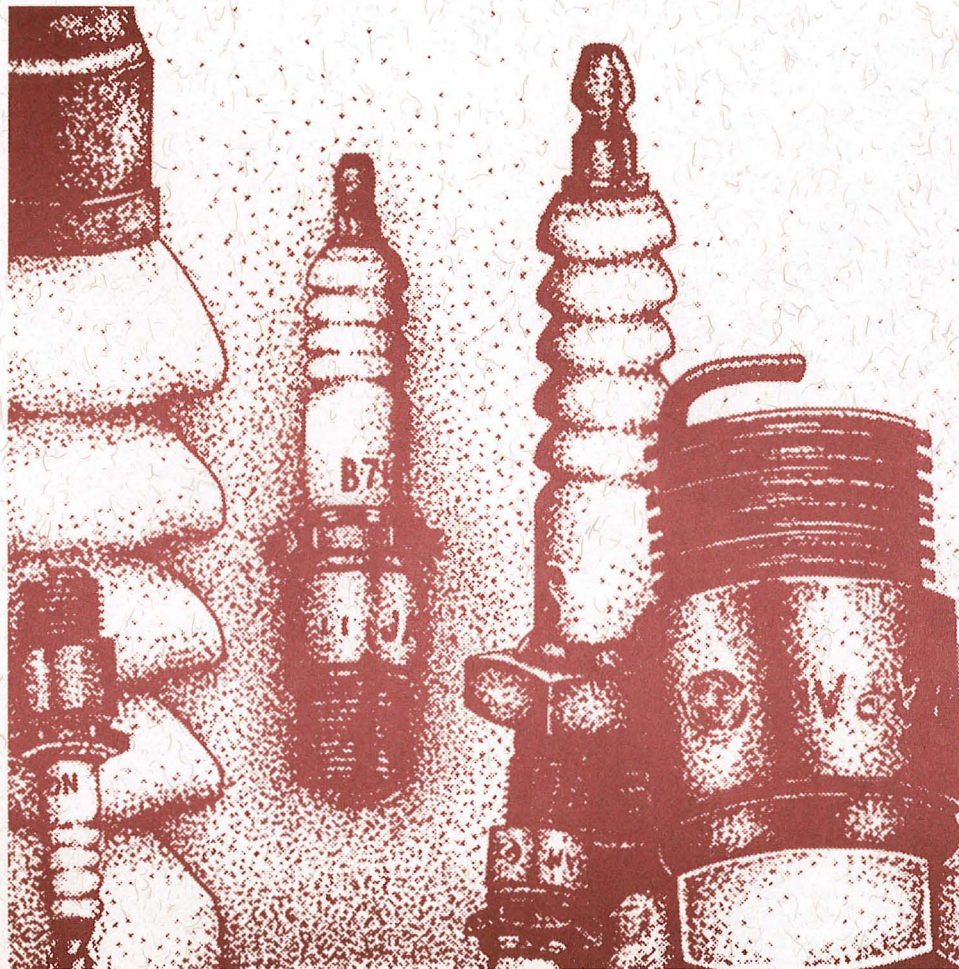
*Andrew Zynowski*



*Andrew Zyrowski*

## Spark II

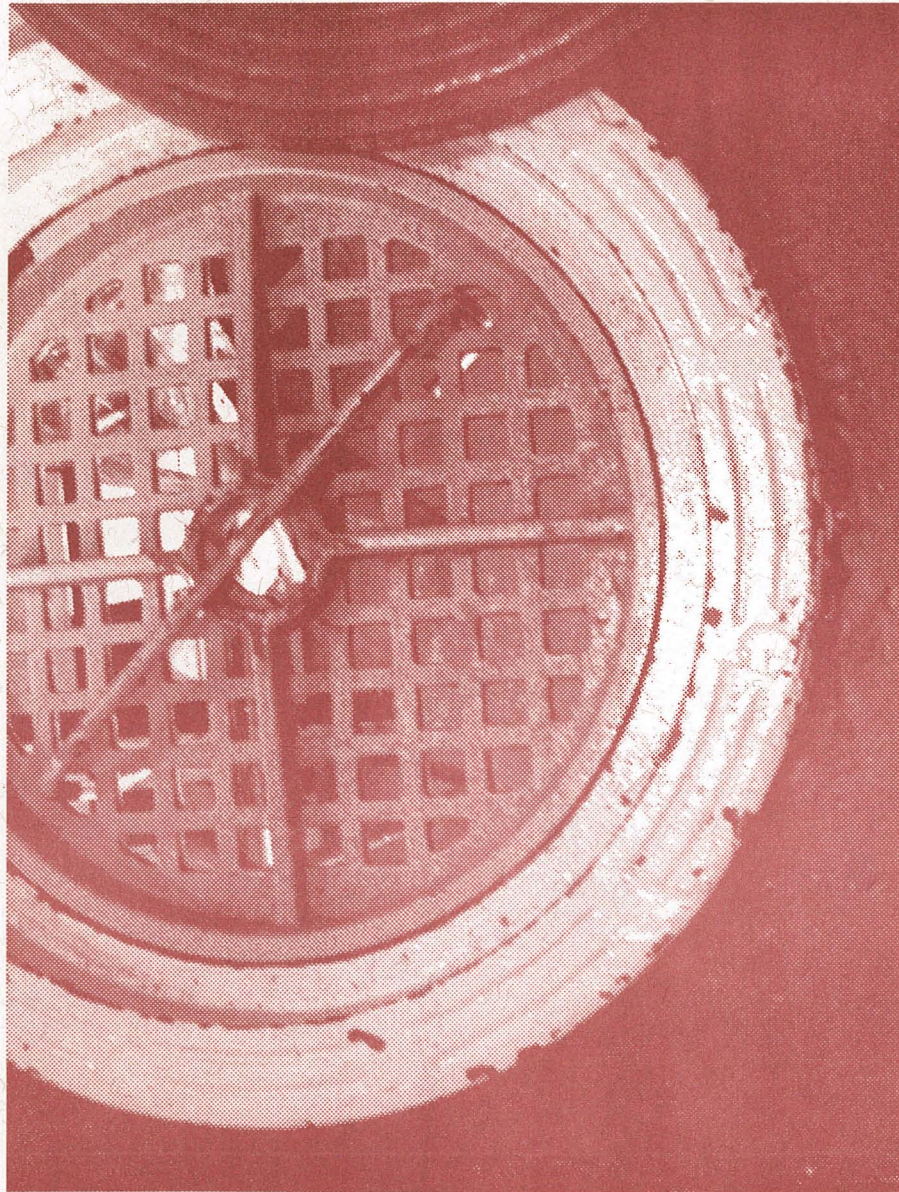
SELECTION OF MERIT





# Thinking Tank

SELECTION OF MERIT



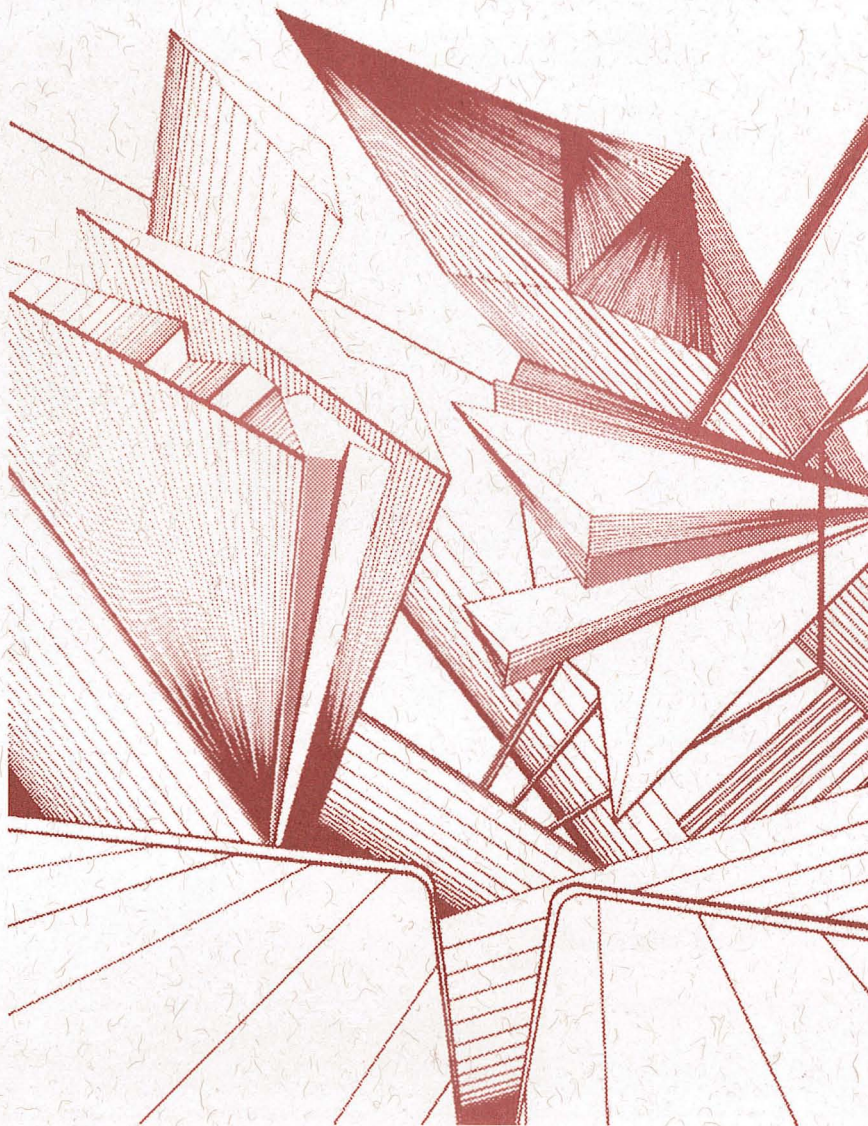
*Cindy Badley*



*Andrew Zynowski*

# Upheaval

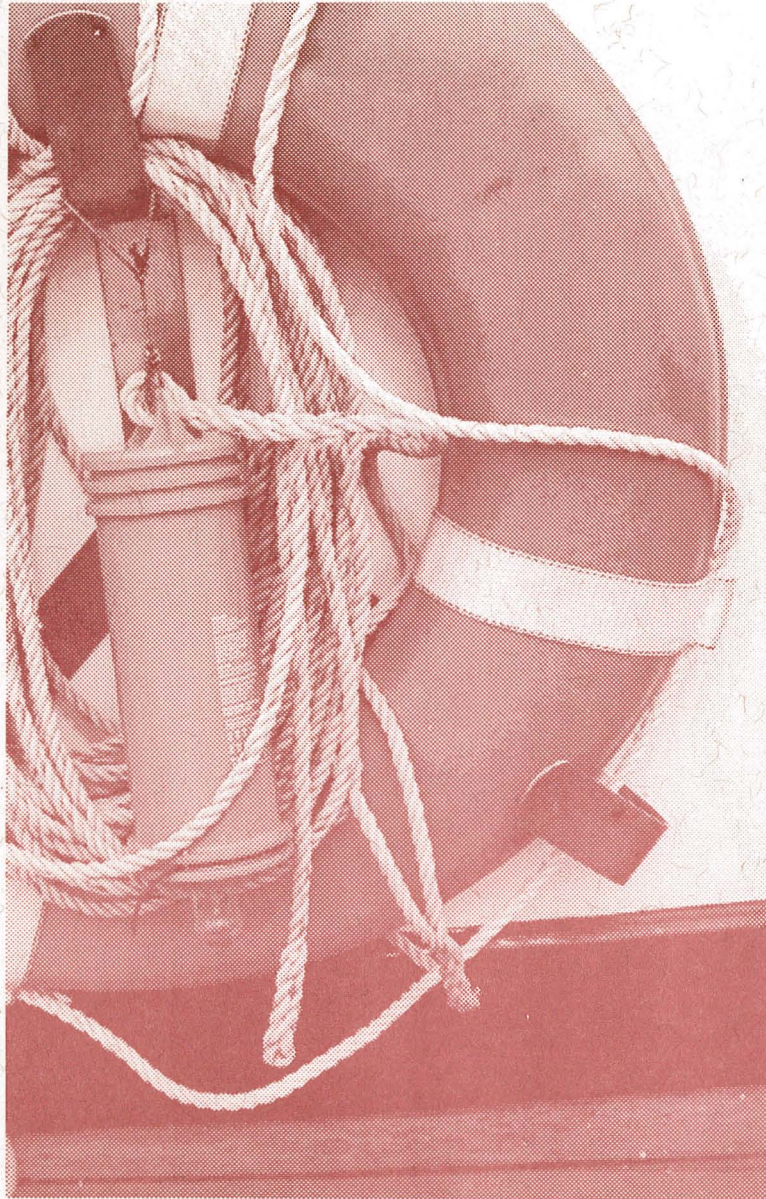
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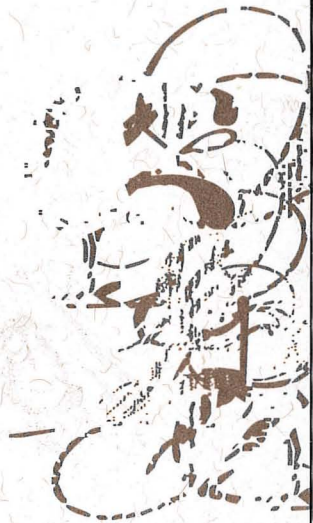


# Waiting

SELECTION OF MERIT



*Cindy Badley*





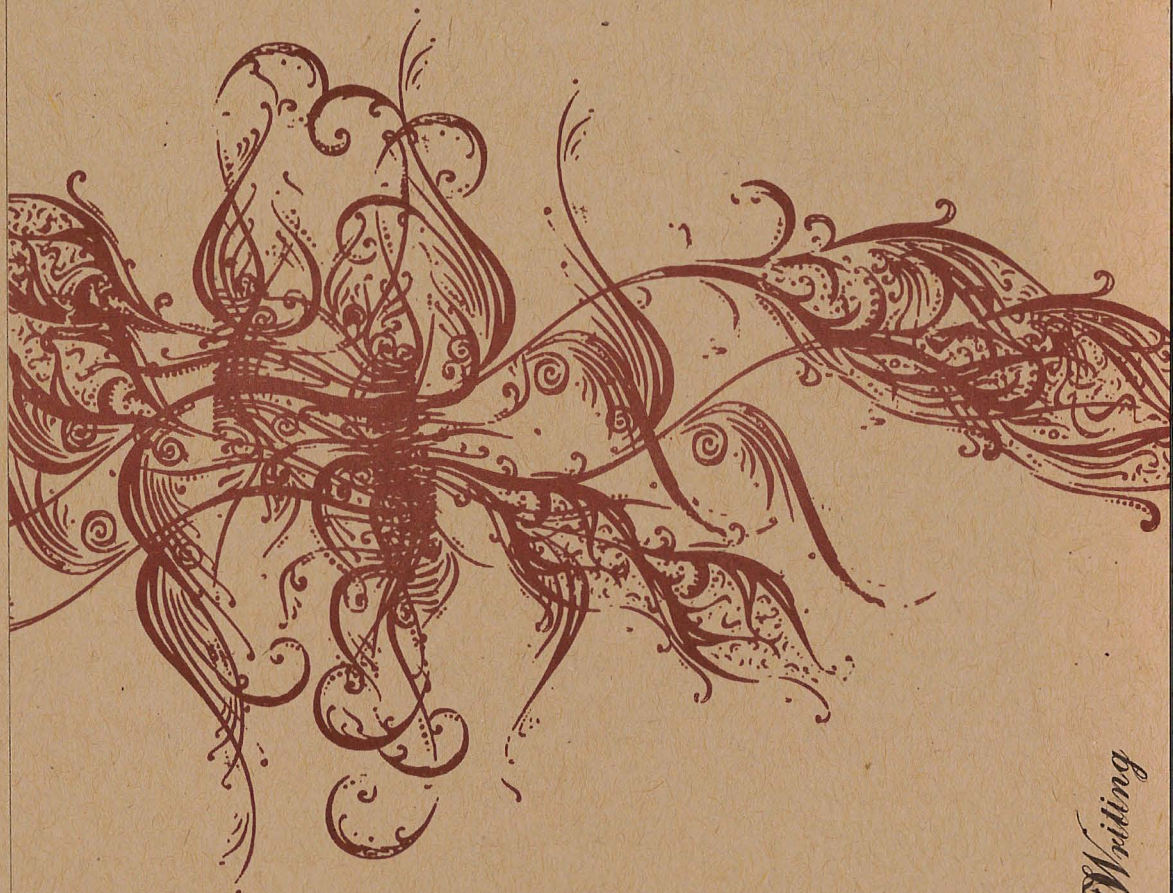




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# A Summer Night

## SELECTION OF MERIT

Dusky air swirls across me  
As I lay on cool grass.  
Nimble daisies,  
Reach for the last shimmer of sunlight  
Floating down to earth.  
Incense from the roses and violets  
Mingle to create a balmy bouquet.  
Darting fireflies  
Erase the thoughts of the day,  
As the darkness gathers in the distance.  
Shadows begin to dance,  
Playing with colors.  
Auburn streaks ignite the sky with fire  
Turning the leaves on the old birch  
Into a muddy gray.  
The air grows colder.  
As I amble away,  
I can feel tension returning.  
Yet for an instant  
I had abandoned the demands  
Of growing older.



*Grimski*  
*Sarah*





## SELECTION OF MERIT

PREEEESENTIIIIING THE GREAT SPINNEROON!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

<clapclapclapclapclapclap>

NEXT IS SCHOOL. THAT'S TWO!

THERE'S THE FUTURE! AND RESPONSIBILITY! AND MARRIAGE! FOLKS,  
HE HAS ALWAYS HAD PROBLEMS GETTING MARRIAGE TO SPIN BUT LOOK  
AT HIM GO!

THAT'S SIX! THE RECORD IS NINE. CAN HE DO IT, FOLKS? I SAID CAN HE



DO IT, FOLKS?!

<CLAPCHEERCLAPCHEER>

YES! THERE'S WORK! THAT'S NUMBER SEVEN! AND HEALTH AND TIME!

NUMBERS EIGHT AND NINE! LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THIS IS  
REMARKABLE. TRULY REMARKABLE!

(huff, huff, puff)

THIS TIES THE OLD RECORD, FOLKS. CAN HE DO ONE MORE? JUST ONE  
MORE? ONLY ONE PLATE LEFT. LIFE. CAN HE GET LIFE TO SPIN?

AND.....YE—WAIT! FAMILY IS LOOKING A LITTLE WOBBLY. (c'mon, c'mon)

NOW FAITH LOOKS A LITTLE SHAKY! (spin, blast you, spin) OH, BETTER  
CATCH SCHOOL AND MARRIAGE! (don't fall, please don't fall.)

**CRASH! CRASH! CRASH! CRASH! CRASH! CRASH! CRASH! CRASH!**

**CRASH! CRASH!**

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE ARE VERY SORRY. IF YOU'LL HEAD TO THE  
TICKET OFFICE, WE'LL GLADLY REFUND YOUR MONEY.

(i can't do this anymore. i just can't do this anymore.)





# Just an Algorithmic Gal

## SELECTION OF MERIT

Mathematical equations run circles in my head,  
Calculating life's uncertainties, predicting what comes next.  
Future possibilities are revealed as plans unfold,  
Risking new adventures, defining solutions for the soul.

Algorithmic antidotes heal the fractions of my heart,  
Offering remedies of logic, so easy to circumvent,  
Formulating crucial facts of life and guessing as I go,  
Creating variation on themes of inverse and direct.

Ratio and proportion add dimension as I strive  
To understand the risks involved in searching for life's signs,  
Dividing daily circumstance with certainties of truth,  
Add, subtract and multiply impressions old and new.

The principles of numbers gently rock me sound asleep,  
Allowing dreams of patterns and problem solving strategies.  
Assuming future ventures rest on choices made today,  
I choose my number theories as I go along my way.



# Naïve Images

## SELECTION OF MERIT

The phone rang at 3:27 A.M. Even in my dreamy confusion, I knew.

"I have bad news, Mandy... really bad." Jarred didn't have to say another word for me to know what exactly the bad news was, but for some reason I still needed to hear it. "Grandma died," he said simply. His lack of emotion gave me comfort. It had been her time. She had been sick. I'd been waiting for this call for six months now. I stood silent for a few minutes. A short sigh escaped my lips.

At that moment I could picture her perfectly. It had been three weeks since I had seen her last. That day I brought the pictures of my senior prom with me that she had requested. She didn't recognize me in the pictures or sitting on the bed next to her. She fell in and out of consciousness the entire length of my visit. I sat and remembered the way things used to be. Grandma would come to our house to ask if she could take us for the day. On the days my father allowed us to go with her, she always made it fun for us. Most days we would make sugar cookies, sometimes candies or caramels dipped in chocolate. I even remember one day we spent what seemed like forever picking lilacs; I loved it. But as I sat next to her death bed, I realized that the next time I saw her the only physical differences would be that her chest would no longer be moving up and down and her thumb wouldn't be rubbing the back of my hand anymore. I knew it would be the last time I would see her alive. I couldn't bear to see her like that and she didn't even know

who I was anymore.

Later in the morning the day she passed, there was a knock at the door. The woman who stood in our doorway embraced me as she coldly stared at mom standing behind me. I was presented with a gift, reminding me that in just a few hours I would have to put on a happy face. Grandma passed away on the day of my open house, the day before my high school graduation. As I held the small package in my hands, my aunt gave mom two letters. One letter was addressed to her, the other to Alison, my sister.

Mom read her letter and Ali's identical letter, then destroyed Ali's. She would end up telling her of the content, but found it unnecessary for her daughters to think less of our grandmother that day. Little did she know, I quickly and quietly read the letter I had almost felt neglected to have not received. It was written in my grandmother's handwriting, dated one year and four days prior. She had made arrangements. She planned her whole funeral, including who would attend, or rather not attend. In the letter she informed mom and Ali arrangements had been made. They were not allowed in, near or around the funeral home the day of her interment. I felt my pulse quicken, I could feel it in the back of my head. My throat began to close. I stared at the toilet bowl, wanting to scream in anger, but only able to continue heaving.

At the age of sixteen, the last day of my sophomore year in high school, my father sat me down. He told me that he and mom were getting a divorce. Only after my

*Walls*  
*Amanda*



probing did he tell me it was because he had been cheating on our family for three months. Then I was reprimanded for calling the woman he cheated with a whore.

"She's a very nice woman and I will not have you talking about her like that." He had said it like he had said so many other simple things my whole life. He sounded the same way he had sounded when he yelled at me for putting the milk on the wrong shelf in the refrigerator a few years before.

When mom filed for divorce, less than a week later, my father went ballistic. Mom had an hour before he was going to change the locks on the house they shared for the length of their 27 year marriage. Mom and I packed all the belongings we could into deep black garbage bags and left as quickly as possible. That night my father admitted himself to the psych ward at Port Huron Hospital. He was released about three days later. He then made a disturbing comment to Ali. He told her he had finally convinced the people at "the nut house" he had all his marbles so they let him out.

Little to our surprise, he returned to "the nut house." The next time wasn't as calm though. He was committed, escorted in handcuffs. After a day of threats the police found him locked in my childhood home with a shotgun. The next day we found tire marks that went all the way up to my maternal grandparents' eight foot in-ground pool. Later I learned that my father had been there with a cement block and a rope, while I was in that house.

At that point I thought that once my father got the help he so desperately needed and was on medication, things would settle down. I knew my parents would still go through with the divorce, but I thought maybe it would be civil. I was a naïve sixteen year old; I didn't realize that in order for someone like this to get healthy, he has to admit there is a problem and work

to achieve a normal lifestyle.

By the time my grandmother passed, two years after the separation, my father had yet to admit he had any kind of problem. If mom hadn't moved out, if Ali had been a better kid, if I had spent more time with him, he'd be fine. At least that's what he still continues to tell himself.

This tore my family apart in ways I couldn't image. Ali had a restraining order against my father. This caused his family to have intense hatred toward her. Since mom did not stay with him after he came clean about his girlfriend, they hated her also. This left me in an odd place. I didn't do anything to make them hate me. However, if I was presented with the same situations mom and Ali were, I would have reacted in the same way they did, except I probably wouldn't have been nice about it the way they tried to be.

Even with the way things had been since the separation I was floored with the way my grandmother left things here on earth. She was a sweet, generous, church going woman. This made it that much harder to put on a smile for the guests at my open house who had known her.

The real shock didn't come for another two months. Ali and I each received a certified letter, each with a check for \$1, our inheritance. She had been very generous with us during her life time so we weren't expecting her to leave us anything. After the funeral plans, we had both decided that if a check came, it would never be cashed. Instead, she decided to leave us with a slap in the face. Now I have to work hard to remember picking lilacs. It's hard work, to remember, but I try. I try.





# Circus Of Karma

## SELECTION OF MERIT

Dust blows, souls scatter  
Heads bow for an un-sensed righteousness.  
Wander weakly, my old child,  
Forever stay not delusionally oblivious.  
You see the world for the sake of eyes,  
Without vision being just as blind,  
Fading under a circus of lies.  
Watch who swings,  
Watch who juggles,  
We already know who eats the fire.

Watch what they make of it;  
A harmless little seed.  
It feeds on lies and betrayal  
Growing into tangled weeds...  
Or maybe that was just her untamed hair?  
We all know who eats the fire.

And Oh! Her precious unseen righteousness,  
Only there for when she needs, needs, needs,  
The old man breathes in the sun and  
Breathes out the moon  
As he weeps, weeps, weeps.  
And we all know who eats the fire.

Holly Bernard



# Rented Life

## SELECTION OF MERIT

Never changing white walls,

without a personality.

Always changing occupants

this rented life.

Boxes and Couches are carried in,

then moved all back out.

Coming and going never making a home,

why doesn't anyone ever stay.

Freshly cut grass,

a new coat of paint.

Shows the desire for caring,

but this rented life has no ownership pride.

No one cares around here,

cigarette butts, fast food wrappers

stomping, screaming, complaining occupants,

who use me and then just move away.

None make a home if not owned,

In this rented life.



# In the Becoming

## SELECTION OF MERIT

It all began with a trickling  
A tiny stream of arctic cold water  
As it trickled into the land  
The land drank  
And the sky smiled

A turtle sipped the icy water  
He walked into the cove  
The coven  
Loving, a husband can be a nothing  
A glimpse of a star can consume a mind  
She worships Prince Charming  
And gives only a cursory shrug to her husband's hug

But, the ice cold water  
That arctic drink  
The melting, pure, chill stream  
Slowly,  
Becoming a river of forever

In the becoming  
All things had a source  
And, the source was good

In the ever after,  
Laughter  
Many wanting to be master...  
A pastor,...a bastard  
Just another chapter...

In the becoming, they heard the drumming  
But it meant something  
Concrete oceans now...crummy



*P. Mc Coy*  
*Jason*



# Depression Is....

## SELECTION OF MERIT

a suffocating blanket of darkness  
that smells like chlorine instead of Downy.

a bully pushing you down in the gritty brown dirt  
who won't let up till he's done with you.

a tangled brush pile of branches  
which burns fast and hot searing your skin  
then slows, while scarring heat still bakes.

a rumbling ache of gravel in your chest  
heavy rocks crushing together  
robbing breath from your crying mouth.

a field that once grew green raspy cornstalks,  
but now grows wind wisped dust.



# Beatniks

## SELECTION OF MERIT

To the beat  
Of an errant drum,  
Pretentious berets and  
Black turtle-necks spout claptrap;  
*Skit scatting*  
Through haze thick with  
Smoky metaphor and  
Cigarettes.  
A woman  
Flails, her limbs  
Black snakes  
Slithering the beat.  
Her capricious gestures  
Release  
Earthly tethers;  
The enigmatic pulse ceases,  
Yet clings  
To grasped rapture.  
Freedom in disorder  
Found.

Micki Dumoski





# Trunk

## SELECTION OF MERIT

Decrepit wooden trunk

Deep, grained, skin withered through time.

The smell of freshly cut oak still immersing through old, jagged seams

I may imagine the worldly travels that this trunk may have endured.

Antique beauty held is none the less worthwhile

Thickly, braided hemp emerge from parallel sides

A faint creak as I open your hinged head

Penciled marks dating your history are a novel of the past.



# Glass Diamonds

## SELECTION OF MERIT

I was driving down Interstate 94 toward Detroit. I had no idea why, but this morning a force seemed to draw me to my car and send me on a mysterious journey.

I traveled the expressway west and began to pass exits leading to familiar streets. Things looked familiar as I got closer to Detroit. Moross... Cadieux... East Outer Drive... Chalmers... and when I reached the exit for Conner I was pulled up from the fast paced expressway to the busy two lane street.

My mind knew where I was going. It had been there before, many times, but today I went there with the feeling that this would be the last.

The sparkle of an object in my mind woke me from my state of unconsciousness. I realized that I was in my old neighborhood, heading toward the house I grew up in. We moved when I was thirteen and hadn't been back since. I felt drawn to the house to say goodbye, because the heartaches of moving from the only place I knew of as home were still with me, almost as if I had unfinished business. I wanted to say farewell to all the memories of my childhood one last time.

I turned my car down my street, and as I got closer to my house, memories started to rush back to my mind.

Driving down the street, I remembered the many floods our block seemed to have. After rainstorms the streets would become almost like a lake, water sometimes to the sidewalks. As kids we would play in the knee deep water, splashing each other for hours. The parents, on the other hand, were

always upset, because if you didn't park in your driveway the night before you would wake up to a flooded engine. My mom's Volkswagen had to be "dried out" many times.

I pulled into my driveway and even though the house was dilapidated I saw it as it had been twenty years ago. There was a sign on my front lawn and on two others, but I hadn't paid attention. It startled me as I read it. Sold to city. Demolition May 13th for new high rise apartments and hotel. Detroit was growing and they needed to accommodate the rising population and the expansion of city airport.

As I got out of the car, butterflies began to form in my stomach. I wasn't nervous or scared. I just wasn't sure I wanted to relive the past.

I walked across the lawn, as I always did, and up the porch stairs. The screen door still had the N artistically shaped on the front in grey metal.

Remembering how hard it was to open the lock, I put the key into the oak door and turned, pulled and pushed. I have always kept my key for sentimental reasons. Just as I remembered, I thought to myself, as I stepped into memory lane.

The first thing I saw was the large foyer closet. There was a light inside and when I was little I would go in there to read. Then it was a huge space, but today it seemed so small. I liked to play post office in the foyer and the mail slot in the front door provided a perfect mailbox. I would write letters, then address the envelopes, make my own



Holly Nasakowski-Albany



stamps and send them to all my stuffed animals that lived in the house.

Before nightfall I decide to go out into the backyard. The large locust tree was still in the middle of the yard, probably soon to be cut down. The two car garage was still standing, although the door was almost ready to fall off. No one ever really went in there, and I wasn't allowed to as a little girl, because of all the junk that was stored in there. My mom's old Volkswagen Beetle was always parked in front of the closed door to keep out unwanted visitors. Now the green Beetle was gone and the garage was empty.

I walked over to the patio where I played hopscotch and back to the lilac bushes. The flowers were just beginning to bloom, and I could smell their sweet fragrance in the air, as I remembered the many photographs taken in front of those bushes, and hiding in them to avoid the picture taking. Every spring when the purple, white and pink flowers would blossom, we took family pictures. I didn't really like my picture taken, and the sun was always in my eyes, but now I wished for that family ritual.

A cold, chilling breeze startled me from my thoughts, and a sparkle from the setting sun hit a piece of broken glass in the alley, sending me back in the house.

Once inside my house again I locked the back door behind me and decided to explore the house from bottom to top. I walked down the basement stairs and turned to my left, to the space that was my grandfather's office. I remember talking on the phone for hours in the privacy of the partitioned part of the basement. Also, I remember helping my grandfather write checks and keeping the family finances organized. He made sure that I knew how to manage money at a young age. Now I am so glad for that experience.

I walked out of the empty office space and

into the large emptiness of the basement. It was filled with many treasures when I used to live there, but now only dust, dirt and broken light bulbs lay on the floor. At the far end is the pantry where all the neat old dishes were kept.

I turned to leave the basement and looked straight at the furnace looming in the darkness. I believed monsters used to hide in the shadows behind the huge green beast, and some still might, so I hurried up the wooden stairs.

Safely back on the first floor, I went into the kitchen. None of the appliances were there, but I remember the many hours of hard work my grandma used to spend cooking and washing dishes. I always loved to help out in the kitchen, especially at cookie baking time. The marble counter tops and the white walls were all stained with dirt, but I could still see it as the brightest and cleanest room in the house.

On the way to the living room I went through the dining room, I remembered the numerous cases of Girl Scout cookies that were piled to the ceiling every March. And I couldn't forget getting ready for Thanksgiving dinner at our house. We had a special tablecloth for the preparation, which would start the night before, and grandma and I would cube bread for the stuffing. Then leave it overnight and get up at 5:30am to start the cooking, stuffing from scratch, spreading butter on the turkey with my hands, and peeling potatoes. I could smell the comforts of that special day. After the preparation was done I could change tablecloths and set the table with the special dishes.

I moved onto the living room, which was probably my favorite in the house because everything seemed to happen in this room. All the holidays and birthdays were celebrated here, and I watched television and played in this room. For my birthday



we would have slumber parties, and my friends and I would all sleep in this room; although we never really slept, we tried to stay up as late as we could. There was also a huge marble fireplace. We never burned real wood in it but would get the fake logs that burned colors. No pretty colors today.

Christmas was always a special holiday, and our huge fake tree would stand in the corner next to the fireplace, always overflowing with presents underneath. Christmas in the new house was never the same after we moved. The huge tree didn't fit and not as much family came to our house because we lived so far away. We always had to go to someone else's house and leave our Christmas behind. My play time was cut short because we had to travel, and I could only pick one thing to take with me.

I walked past the bathroom, and as I looked in I could see our dog lying on the tile floor right by the door. The big bath tub was another favorite hiding place. I would fill it with blankets and pillows and read books for hours.

My grandmother's room was the one on the right, and that was the one I used to sleep in when I was sick. I pushed open the door and reached to turn on the light, but nothing happened. So I walked to the window to open the shade. As I let the last of the sunlight shine in, its rays hit an object in the middle of the floor. I went over to look: it was the door knob. I loved the door knobs on the bedroom doors. They were the glass ones that looked like diamonds, at least I thought. My grandmother's diamonds never seemed to stay on the door and probably had fallen off, and no one cared to put the door knob back together like I always did. I fixed the door for the last time and shut the door behind me.

The next room I walked into was my grandfather's room. I never really went in

here unless it was to play gin rummy with him. I never won. He was the only one in the family that could actually beat me at cards.

The upstairs door was next to my grandfather's bedroom and these stairs lead to my mother's and my bedrooms. I opened the door and remembered how I used to play elevator, because the door was the kind you pushed back on a track. My mom made a panel for me with pretend buttons to push what floor I wanted to go to, just like the real elevator in Hudson's Department Store.

I walked slowly up the stairs, leery of what I might find. They still creaked in the middle as I remembered; to be quiet and sneaky you had to go up on the sides.

The attic door was at the top of the stairs, and there was another one on the far wall of the little room. Both these doors were kept tightly shut, because I always thought there were monsters inside. I always piled stuff in front of the doors, hoping they wouldn't get out.

I walked into the biggest room, which was mine, with the wood floors and giant bookshelves still in place. Looking up, the ceiling was the same as I remembered; it sloped down on the side walls, so you would hit your head if you weren't paying attention.

I looked between the bookshelves and the window seat was still there. I used to love to sit there and look out at the busy street below or look into the sky and see the planes coming in for landing at city airport. As I got up from the seat and turned toward the closet, the glass diamond caught my eye.

I turned to see the closet, my closet, my diamond door knob, sparkling more than the other ones in the house. These door knobs seemed to be the only things that hadn't become dingy and dirty with age. I turned the knob and looked inside to find the biggest closet I had ever seen. Of course





as a little girl I thought I had the biggest closet ever made, but today as I look inside I can see that it is just a closet. I paused with my hand still on the knob.

No one would miss it, I thought to myself.

I went down the stairs and slowly looked at everything one last time. I'd always remember this house as my home, because it was the house we all lived in together first. No other family lived there before us. This house was built for me. It sounds a little childish to say that, but that's how I felt.

When I went out the front door with all my memories inside my pocket, I secretly smiled to myself, all the memories safely inside the diamond door knob.

Every time I look into the glass diamond, I can see my old house inside, along with all my memories.





# Lines

## SELECTION OF MERIT

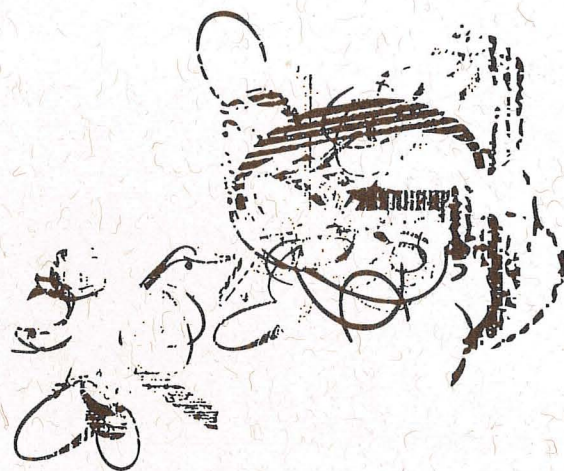
She graces the stage  
Scarcely lit to hide imperfections  
That probably don't exist.  
Their anxious eyes follow her  
In search of superficial gratification,  
Laying down cheap dollars bills  
For a moment's adulterated attention,  
Throwing away her memory  
After a few drinks and a new day.  
I lay down my dollar and  
Her arms linger around my neck.

A hint of cigarette smoke  
Buried under the green tingle  
Of her spearmint gum,  
The warmth of vanilla hair,  
Peridot eyes defined  
In perfect black lines  
Set on a smooth powdered face  
With seductive glossed lips,  
The softness of her delicate body  
With her gentle, passionate gestures.

And the black stars etched  
Along her silky bare sides  
Hide her remaining privacy;  
An unseen intimacy  
Toying with my curiosity  
And what's behind those  
Thick, black lines.















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